Interview with David D. Newsom

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR DAVID D. NEWSOM

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

Initial interview date: June 17, 1991

Q: Mr. Ambassador, let me start as we do in all these interviews with a question about your background. Where did you start?

NEWSOM: I was born in Richmond, CA in 1918. I went to primary and secondary schools there and then went to the University of California at Berkeley. I graduated as an English major in 1938. My father had been a part owner of a daily newspaper in Richmond. I had grown up in the newspaper world and have every intention of following a newspaper career. After graduation, I worked on the Richmond Independent for a year and then went to the School of Journalism at Columbia University, from which I was granted a Master's Degree. I also received a Pulitzer travel scholarship in 1940 which was awarded annually to three graduates of the school. In return for a check of $1,500, you had to promise to stay out of the country for at least nine months.

So I decided to go around the world in 1940-41. I bought a ticket on the Osaka-Seosin-Kiasha lines for $600 and was more or less on the last Japanese ship to dock at several ports around the world. I spent six weeks in Japan and two weeks in North China, which was then occupied by the Japanese. I was in the company of Carl Koop, who was the curator of the oriental exhibit at the New York Public Library, whom I met on the ship

while we were crossing the Pacific. Then I visited what was then known as the Dutch East Indies, then Ceylon, then India where I spent another six weeks. There I met leaders of the Congress Party, including Gandhi. By that time, I had developed an association with the San Francisco Chronicle, which allowed me to interview people as I traveled around the world. From India, I went to South Africa and across to Argentina, Chile and Brazil and then I returned home.

On my travels, I met some Foreign Service people. I remember particularly Consul General Gray in Colombo, Ceylon who wanted to know what I was doing in his territory. I developed an interest in the world outside the US borders. When I returned, I went back to work on Chronicle. Then I joined the Navy in January, 1942. I served primarily in the US, particularly Hawaii, in the naval intelligence branch.

My father died during the war. My mother sold out our interest in the Richmond Independent. She helped us to buy a weekly newspaper in Walnut Creek, CA. My wife and I ran that for about 18 months. One night, at a dinner party with some friends, I heard about someone who was taking something called the Foreign Service Entrance Examination. That sounded interesting. So for the heck of it I decided to take it. I passed both the written and the oral — the latter on May 17, 1947. I remember the day well because it was the day our first son was born. On that day, I also learned something that was important in the Foreign Service. There were three of us who took the oral exam in San Francisco. One was Hugh Appling, who also joined the Foreign Service, myself and another young man, whose name I have long forgotten. He sat with us while we were waiting for the exam. I listened to him talk about his travels in Europe, the languages he knew, etc. I said to myself that I with no training in international relations didn't have a prayer of passing the exam. But I took the exam. On the board sat a man by the name of Charles Eberhardt, who had been Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to Nicaragua and Costa Rica. He always asked a question about baseball. Since I had done some sports writing, he asked me a very intricate question of how to score a fielder's choice. This is pertinent because some years later I met the Chairman of the panel

that interviewed me and had passed me. I was already in the Service when I met the Chairman. I reminded him of the time we met in San Francisco and inquired about the other candidate who appeared to have so many qualifications, but apparently had not passed. The Chairman acknowledged that he remembered that series of exams. He told me that Eberhardt had asked a baseball question to this other young man. He had asked who Connie Mack was. In 1947, Mack was still a well known name and was the manger of the Philadelphia Athletics. The other candidate did not know. That started the panel to ask a lot more questions about the United States. It was obvious that the young man knew everything about Europe, spoke several foreign languages, but knew little about his own country. I have often passed that lesson to people preparing for the Foreign Service exam because too often people do not realize that the Foreign Service's job is to represent the United States which includes explaining about our country. I found that growing up in the highly political atmosphere of small city newspaper was very helpful both before and after entering the Foreign Service. I gave me a glimpse into the operations of our political institutions as well as politics in general.

So my wife and I decided to sell the newspaper and enter the Foreign Service.

Q: When you entered the Foreign Service, what kind of training did you receive?

NEWSOM: I attended the A-100 course which was basically, as it always has been, a course in the rules and regulations of the Foreign Service. It wasn't until I had left the Foreign Service, teaching at Georgetown University, that I began to learn about the basic classical literature on the practice of diplomacy. In 1947 and even today, that is not taught at the Foreign Service Institute. Foreign diplomats talked about Sato and Nicholson, but all of that was totally unfamiliar to me.

Q: In 1947, what was the your view and that of your classmates about the United States' role in the world and how you looked at the world?

NEWSOM: I understood the circumstances better after I had been in the Service than I did in 1947. Then I had a general idea of what the Foreign Service represented. I had a general appreciation of the fact the United States, after World War II, was assuming new responsibilities. The Service was expanding, but I did not have a good comprehension of the situation until after my first tour of duty in Karachi. My experience there led me to realize that those of us who entered the Service in 1946-7 were a very new breed of officers. We had different backgrounds, preparations, interests and perhaps even different priorities from our colleagues who had joined the Service before the War. Their views were very Euro-centered.

I came in against a background of having had at least a brief encounter with the independence aspirations of the colonial world. I had an interest in that development which to many of the previous generation was either incomprehensible or unacceptable or which they found uncomfortable. There were others in my class who saw opportunities, certainly in South Asia and in Southeast Asia and later in Africa, which our predecessors did not foresee or appreciate. There was also a clash between generations as many of us who were less interested in the formalities, the tradition, the niceties of protocol than in the jobs that we were assigned to do. We were also a group which was more prepared to involve ourselves in the internal political developments of a foreign country than had been considered appropriate by the pre-War Service.

I had requested that my first assignment be to India because I had been fascinated by it and its independence movement during my travels. I was assigned to Karachi, which had become the capital of the new independent state of Pakistan (August 14, 1947) and arrived on the day Gandhi was assassinated — January 30, 1948. We had a very small Embassy; there were only about six Americans. The circumstances were quite difficult at the time. I was assigned general duties for the first three months. When USIA's predecessor agency was organized, in light of my background, I was offered the job of information officer. I was essentially to start our information program in Pakistan. That

brought me directly face-to-face with the difficulty that the older members of the Foreign Service had in understanding why the US was starting an information program. They had difficulty in understanding the propriety of a young Foreign Service officer, in a separate office located downtown Karachi, who visited Universities, politicians, etc who did not work through the Foreign Office. This was symptomatic of the change that was taking place in the conduct of international relations.

Q: What was the situation in Pakistan in the 1948-50 period?

NEWSOM: The partition of India had been accomplished hurriedly. The British, and particularly Mountbatten, was not sympathetic to the creation of Pakistan. That meant that the government of Pakistan, established in August, 1947 in Karachi, was a government without any resources, files, equipment or any of the necessities required to operate. I remember some notes that we exchanged with the new government: we typed not only our note to them, but their reply to us as well on our typewriters because they didn't have any in the Foreign Ministry. Karachi had been a city of 350,000 people before partition; about 125,000 of those were Hindus or Parsi who left for India. In return, 500 to 600 thousands Muslim refugees had flowed into the city. When we arrived, Karachi was an over-crowded city with people sleeping on sidewalks with all of their meager possessions — little bundles that stood besides them. Some did not rise in the mornings and were carted away.

The remnants of the bitter communal riots between Muslims and Sikhs of the Punjab were still very much in evidence. The day before we arrived witnessed that last communal riot in Karachi with about 125 Sikhs being killed in the center of the city. So Karachi was a city under great stress. The diplomatic corps was housed mostly in one hotel. The American Embassy had been fortunate because it benefitted by a deal that a Parsi had made with the government which protected his house, which was next to our residence, from government seizure in return for him building three houses for the diplomatic corps behind the residence. We, the Newsoms, got one of those houses because we had a child and that put us on a priority list. We shared that house with another family — the Josephs

— for three months. The house had no screens, no air conditioning which were almost essential in Karachi and the house was very basic. Karachi was without a doubt a hardship post by American standards, but it was a post where a small group of American Foreign Service people would work well together in the face of adversity. The group was led first by Charg# Charles William Lewis, then Paul Alling came as the first Ambassador. He developed cancer shortly after arrival and died within a few months. Hooker Doolittle, who had been Consul General in Lahore, was brought to Karachi to act as Charg# until the new Ambassador arrived.

Hooker was one of the great characters of the Foreign Service. His grand-daughter, I believe still lives in the Washington area. He once told me that he would never be an Ambassador, but that he had a lot of fun in the Foreign Service being independent. He had lost his household effects four times during his career; the first time was in the Russian revolution when he had been Consul in Tbilisi. He had married a Russian lady and spent his honeymoon being evacuated on a destroyer from Tbilisi. Then he had been Consul in Bilbao at the time of the Spanish civil war. Then he was in Tunis when the Germans invaded and in Lahore at the time of partition. He was a man who felt intensely about individuals, sometimes with positive effects as when he gave courageous support to Bourguiba when they were both in Tunis. He recognized that this was a man of destiny in his country and incurred the unending enmity of the French by his support. That was even noticeable in Karachi when we were there. On the other hand, Hooker took a very negative view of Nehru. He wrote a piece of doggerel verse called “Pandit, the Bandit” which reflected his views of the origins of the Kashmir problem. Later on during my Karachi tour, Merritt Cootes came as public affairs officer. He and I figured out that Doolittle must have typed this poem in multiple copies on his typewriter and that he could not have typed more that seven copies. In the interest of US-India relations, we tried to retrieve the copies as they appeared. We thought we had them all. One day, Walter Lippmann came to town and to our amazement and horror we saw Doolittle and Lippmann sitting on a swinging sofa in the garden with Doolittle reading the eighth and last remaining copy of his poem. Doolittle

was very much a man of the old school — charming, but who worked in the morning and then had two or three pink gins for lunch and spent the afternoon bargaining for carpets and other similar activities.

Doolittle was supported was Julian Nugent, who was the DCM, Harold Joseph, Nick Thacher, Tom Simons — father of our current Ambassador to Poland — and myself. That was the substantive staff of the Embassy.

Q: Later our relationship with Pakistan became a very political one because we used it as a balance to India in a Cold War context. You were there at the beginning. What was our attitude towards Pakistan and India at the time?

NEWSOM: The attitudes of the Embassies in Karachi and New Delhi reflected the views of their respective “clients”. When we got together, the conversation was as argumentative as the discussions between the two countries. Tom Simons, who was the INR man in Karachi, had an academic background and was a specialist in South Asia. He conducted basic research. He had done similar work in Calcutta and therefore had a more balanced view than the partisans. But he was the exception. The rest of us thought that there was justification for partition in light of the persecution that the Muslims had encountered, but we were of course under the intense emotional barrage of the Muslims refugees who had fled from India.

The relations between Pakistan and the US in those years were difficult because of the public perception in this country, primarily of Gandhi and Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the founder and first President of Pakistan. I remember having to deal with the American press covering Jinnah's death in September, 1948. When Gandhi was assassinated, the American papers were of course filled with highly laudatory comments. When Jinnah died, he was seen as austere, inflexible and a man who had done great damage to India by his insistence of partition. That attitude was not the official attitude, but this view was reflected in the American press — The New York Times, The Herald Tribune and

the other newspapers that we used to receive at the time. Our personal relationship with government officials were good. Washington's attitude was that given the growing tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States and given the Azerbaijani events occurring near by, it was in our interest to build good relations with the new state of Pakistan.

My reference to the Azerbaijani events concerns an effort made in 1947 to create an independent republic of Azerbaijan in northwestern Iran, with Soviet support. This would dismembered part of Iran. George Allen, then our ambassador in Tehran, took a very firm position, supported by Washington, that the US would not tolerate such action and we gave the Iranians moral support to squash that drive towards independence. That was one of the first thrusts and counter-thrusts of the Cold War. So Washington had those events very much in mind as we developed our policy toward Pakistan.

We were just at the beginning of our aid efforts. Truman's Inaugural speech, which launched the Point IV program — a program of technical assistance — together with our experience from the Greek-Turkish aid programs and the Marshall Plan, was the beginning of our world-wide assistance efforts. Pakistan was an early recipient of economic assistance and attention. While I was in Karachi, negotiations with Harvard University had begun. This contract was to collect a team of economists to review Pakistan's situation and to develop an economic strategy. West Pakistan was a potentially rich area, but partition had disrupted economic development and had changed a lot of the potential. There were also problems with the economic viability and prospects of East Pakistan, which is now Bangladesh. So the US was one of the first Western powers to take an interest in Pakistan's economic future. I was not directly involved and don't remember all the details, but Pakistan was certainly one of the early recipients of US assistance in the Third World.

Q: As you developed our information program, did you get any instructions from Washington or were you pretty much left to your own devices?

NEWSOM: A lot, of course, had to be developed locally. I used whatever resources were available. We used the “Wireless File” which was transcribed from a squeaky short wave radio by a local employee. We began to get books and films. I started a monthly magazine called “Panorama” which I believe is still being published. It was about the United States. We got some money for educational grants — it must have been part of a program just being developed. Our program was very modest. We benefitted from the large interest in the US that the Pakistani exhibited. Particularly interested was the wife of the then Prime Minister Leaki Ali Khan who was subsequently assassinated. She had been educated in an American girls' school in Calcutta and loved American songs and movies. We had at times to temper her enthusiasm. In 1950, I went to the US as one of her escorts for a trip she took to this country. One thing she always wanted to do was to go to Hollywood. So we arranged for her visit to the Movie-land. We were very conscious of the conservative Muslim society from which she came; we structured the visit so that there would not be any embarrassing occasions. We were to visit Jimmy Stewart who was then making Harvey. As we were walking down to the set, some P.R. man came along and said something to the Prime Minister's wife. She nodded agreement and we were suddenly whisked away to a set where Abbot and Costello were making a film on the Foreign Legion. She was a long time fan of the Abbot and Costello. So before I knew it, there she was in between Abbot and Costello, each in a French Foreign Legion uniform having their pictures taken. I could just see what a propagandist could do with that! So I immediately went to the P.R. man and asked him to kill all the pictures that had been taken for the benefit of maintaining good US-Pakistan relations and for the American film industry. She thanked me later because she also had come to the same realization, but had been so carried away by the glory of the moment that she had forgotten who she was.

We had a friendly atmosphere in Karachi in which to work. There was an interest in the US Our facilities were very limited. We were just beginning to learn about the pluses and minuses of information efforts. We learned that the projection of the US was not nearly as important as how US policy was received by the local population. In May

1948, when Israel was created, Pakistan, as a strong Muslim country, reacted very negatively. We had demonstrations in the streets in front of the Embassy. I was sent by the Ambassador to confront the demonstrators and to invite the leaders up to meet with the Ambassador. That was something that probably could not have been done in later years when demonstrations became more hostile and virulent. But in 1948, we were able to have a dialogue with the demonstrators. We had an imaginative administrative officer who sensed that the demonstrators might move to the residence. So we got the Pakistani police to move its kiosk from the residence to the front of the house occupied by the Parsi, who lived next to the Ambassador. Those were the days when things could be done more informally or imaginatively. But US support for Israel as well the perception that the US was not doing enough to get India out of Kashmir limited our influence in Pakistan, although I never encountered the open hostility that I experienced later in Iraq.

American policy towards anti-colonial revolutions was at that time very ambivalent. So it was not easy for us to detach ourselves totally from European powers and policies. We were supporting the re-entry of the Dutch into Indonesia, we were supporting the re-entry of the French into Indochina. North Africa had not yet become an issue, but there were some inklings of independence movements there. Washington liked to stress in this period, which I always felt was of dubious validity, was that we had been a colonial subject at one time and therefore we could sympathize easily with those who were still under the yoke. 1947 and 1948 were very much different from 1776. Our revolution was essentially one against members of the same race. In the post World War II period, race was a significant factor and American support for Europeans was viewed through that prism. There was a general recognition that Roosevelt had tried to convince Churchill to give independence to India, but whatever benefits we got from that were tempered by some of our actions in the immediate post War period.

It is my recollection that it was a continuing effort to separate in people's minds from the US from the European colonial powers.

Q: The US was a country still in its segregation period. Did our treatment of the blacks get much Pakistan media attention?

NEWSOM: I don't remember that as being amajor issue. We were dealing primarily with questions about US support for Israel, the US identification with colonial powers and the perception of a US more sympathetic to India than to Pakistan. Even the USSR's policies were not a major issue at the time.

Pakistan emerged as very sensitive to any comments around the world, including the US, about Islam. That was of course natural in light of its roots. Pakistan was the first country to try to awaken a Pan-Islamic fervor in the world. They sent Chabri Kalakiusiman on a mission to other Muslim countries in 1948 to try to create a Pan-Islamic movement which did not have a particularly anti-American cast.

How was the Pakistan press during the late 40's? Was it open or as in many other parts of the country, was it “for sale” to the highest bidders?

NEWSOM: I think it was a good press. We had good relationships with it. In contrast to the problems I faced in Iraq later, it was a very satisfying experience. Haltap Hussein, the editor of the leading newspaper in Karachi, Dawn, and I became good friends. We didn't always see eye-to-eye and he would occasionally write bitter editorials critical of US actions, but our relationship was not affected. We would periodically be able to place some of our material in Pakistani newspaper. In those years, the press had not become as venal as it may have become later, certainly in other countries.

Q: You left Karachi in 1950 for a delightful interlude of a little more than a year in Oslo. How did that come about?

NEWSOM: Like everyone at the time, we had some health problems. We had contracted amoebic dysentery. We had had about every fever known to mankind. So I think the Department showed some compassion and sent us to Oslo. Also at the time, and rightly

so, there was a feeling in the Department that younger officers should get experience not only in other geographical areas, but in other functions as well. So I went to Oslo as a consular officer. I spent fifteen months there after which I went to Baghdad as public affairs officer. Although Oslo was a delightful place to live and I found consular work interesting, you would wake up every morning knowing who the Prime Minister was. That was somewhat less exciting than the more uncertain parts of the world.

Q: Your Ambassador was man by the name of Charles Ulrick Bay, a non-career officer. What was he like?

NEWSOM: Charles Ulrick Bay was the CEO of the American Export Line. His grandfather had been born in Norway. I guess he had been a contributor to Democratic coffers. He wanted to be Ambassador to Norway. He was also a sailor of twelve meter boats. About the only time he was seen in Norway was during the summer when he spent a good deal of time at Honkers, which is a port south of Oslo. He used to sail against the then Crown Prince Olaf and other of that social class. He was very sensitive to the fact that he knew very little about the Embassy. In January, 1951 he returned to Oslo suddenly which puzzled everyone. Finally a story appeared in the New York Journal American which said that when Eisenhower, then the SHAPE Commander, had completed a tour of NATO countries, he had reported to Truman on the posts he had visited. He allegedly had told the President that Bay was not in Oslo and had not been there for sometime. Truman according to the story called Bay in Florida and told him to return to Oslo quickly. So Bay reappeared. It was a little embarrassing because he wanted to demonstrate that he had never been away although he didn't recognize many people in the Embassy. There was an economic officer who encountered the Ambassador in the hallway one day. The Ambassador asked him whether he was back for another year as a Fulbright student or some other entirely erroneous assumption.

The Embassy was effectively run by Bill Snow who was the DCM. It was an interesting assignment in two ways. For example, we were administering Section 3(c) of the

Displaced Persons Act. The applicants were primarily young Poles and from other Eastern European countries who had been rounded up by the Germans and taken as forced labor to the mines in North Norway and Finland. Under Section 3(c), someone like that who could prove that he had a relative in the United States, could be granted an immigration visa. This was a heart rendering experience because we knew that in light of the conditions in East Europe at that time the only hope they had was to get to the US So we were confronted with fraudulent documents, health problems — tuberculosis primarily, and were forced to turn many away.

I also worked with the Norwegian police for about six months on the disappearance of an American radio correspondent — Lyford Moore — who had come to Oslo in the winter of 1950 on an annual tour sponsored by the US Army to observe the record the cutting and shipping of Christmas trees for the US forces in Germany. He was some relation to Mrs. Eisenhower. When he suddenly disappeared one winter night without a trace there was a lot of high level interest. An FBI agent was sent to help the Embassy. That was a fascinating glimpse of a slice of Norway life, working with the police while they interviewed all possible witnesses in bars and other places on the Norwegian waterfront. His body finally showed up during the spring thaw. We believe that he had been tossed out of a night club on the waterfront. He had come from Germany and had a few drinks and had fallen asleep at the bar. A Norwegian bouncer came along and awoke him. He got up and flung his arms and said, according to witnesses: “No goddam Hun is going to tell me what I can do”. That didn't go over very well in Norway in 1950. So Moore must have wandered down to the water and fallen in. That episode occupied a lot of my time.

There was another case of a man who arrived in Norway with a fraudulent passport. He had to be returned in the custody of the ship's captain. I found consular work very interesting and I found the experience very valuable particularly in later years when I was in charge of a Mission.

Q: How did your assignment to Baghdad come about? You were there from 1951-55 as Public Affairs Officer?

NEWSOM: After my tour in Pakistan, USIS wanted to co-opt me. USIA was beginning to develop as a separate agency, but it was still during a period when there was a lot of interchange of personnel between that agency and State Department. I told Personnel that I was not interested in becoming a USIA officer. But USIA remained interested and when the Baghdad vacancy arose, they offered to me. It was clearly an interesting opportunity and therefore I accepted it. We went on direct transfer from Oslo to Baghdad in December, 1951.

Q: What was the situation in Iraq when you arrived?

NEWSOM: I have never been a country that was as cynical as Iraq was then. Many Iraqis — the educated elite — were intensely pan-Arab in outlook. They thought that Iraq was an artificial creation resulting from infamous Sikes-Picot agreement which enabled France and Great Britain to carve up the Middle East after World War I. They thought that the monarchy was an implant because the Hashemite family, to which King Faisal II belonged, came out of the Hejaz in Saudi Arabia. That family was not an Iraqi one. The real power rested with the Crown Prince, Abdullah, who ruled with help of a strong politician, Nuri Said.

The Iraqis had a strong belief that the Cabinet, which was periodically reshuffled, were made by either the British or American Embassies. It was believed that we were still manipulating events in Iraq. There was very little distinction made between the US and Great Britain. We were both the “Gray Eminences” in Iraq. When I arrived in December, 1951 to be immediately confronted by the strong emotions aroused by the creation of the State of Israel. It was the fundamental issue that the Embassy had to deal with.

Much of the population felt that not only that the regime, nominally democratic, was run by outside powers and was also very corrupt. There may have been some justification in the belief that the British particularly retained political power by offering favors and contracts to personages close to the Royal family and Said. The Shiite-Sunni split was obvious. There was a Shiite party. Just before I arrived, Sullah Jabbah, a Shiite, had been the Prime Minister for a relatively brief time. It was a classic situation, seen in other parts of the world, of a government in power, which was friendly to us and with which we believed we could work, but which ruled over a population and an elite which was resentful of both the government and the perceived foreign interference. In November, 1952, while I was on home leave in California, the USIS offices in Baghdad were ransacked by a mob. Our offices were in a conspicuous three story building in downtown Baghdad which housed our library and offices. I immediately called Washington and returned to Baghdad. Apparently, on the second or third Anniversary of the so-called Portsmouth Treaty — a treaty between Iraq and Britain — a mob, in protest of that Treaty, demonstrated. It couldn't cross the bridge to demonstrate in front of the British Embassy, so it turned on the US Information Service. The building was burned out. A friend of mine, who worked in the British Embassy, used to joke that we Americans would take all means to distribute our material. The building had an open court yard and apparently the mob piled books and papers there. The wind draft in that court yard picked up much of the material and scattered it throughout the city, including the British Embassy across the river.

That was the second time that a USIS office in Baghdad had been attacked and ransacked. When Armin Meyer was the Public Affairs officer in Baghdad in 1948, at the time of the creation of Israel, his office had been torn apart. When we talk about the terrorist attacks on US establishments, we tend to think it only started in the "70s. In fact, it has been going on for some time. At the time of the second attack, Eisenhower had just been elected and John Foster Dulles had just become Secretary of State. They decided that the Truman doctrine and the experience of the establishment of NATO should be extended eastward. They developed the concept of the Baghdad Pact. They also

felt, as did Haig many years later, that if we could show a resolute support for an Arab country against the Soviet threat, we might be able to wean it and others away from their preoccupation with the Israeli issue.

Dulles came to visit Baghdad in 1953. Our USIS building was still burned out and we had not been able to get compensation from the Iraqis. Indirect approaches sometime produce results. I had a good friend who was a son-in-law of Said. His name was Aryan Abaci. I went to him and pointed out that Secretary Dulles was arriving in a few weeks. I speculated that when Dulles and the Ambassador rode by the burned out building, the Secretary would undoubtedly raise the question of compensation. I thought that when Dulles would hear that no compensation had been paid, that he would not get a very good impression of the Iraqi government. Sure enough, in a very short time, there appeared a check to cover our losses. Dulles arrived and he and our Ambassador, Waldemar Gallman, launched an effort to draw Iraq into a Western-oriented northern tier security arrangement. That came to fruition in February, 1955, when the Prime Minister of Turkey came to Baghdad, met with Said and formed an Iraq-Turkey alliance. I recall that quite vividly because Hermann Eilts, then the Embassy's Chief of the Political Section, and I were at a party together and were called to come to the Embassy immediately. When we arrived, we were debriefed and asked to write the appropriate reporting cables about this new development. That agreement was the beginning of the Baghdad Pact which came into being when Iran, Pakistan and Great Britain adhered to the Turkey-Iraq Pact. We never joined the Pact because Dulles was concerned that if the draft were submitted for ratification, the Senate might insist on a parallel security treaty with Israel, which he did not feel would be in our interest.

But during my tour in Baghdad, we built a security relationship with Iraq and the Baghdad Pact. We signed a Mutual Security Assistance agreement with Iraq. During all this time, we were pushing against the clear discomfort, if not outright opposition, in Iraq to such close cooperation with Britain and the US I recall going with our Charg# to the Foreign Minister's house to get the final signature to the Mutual Security Assistance agreement. The Foreign

Minister signed it, presumably under instructions, and told us that he was going to submit his resignation on the next day just to show that he had signed over his objections. So we continually faced the dichotomy between the government's policy and the attitude of significant segments of the population, which were not at all pleased by the close ties that were developing between Iraq and the US

Q: You seem to suggest that the Pact idea was Washington inspired. Was there discomfort in the Embassy with the concept?

NEWSOM: Yes indeed. There were many signs suggesting that the concept was not acceptable to the Iraqi population, but they were dismissed. It was the classic illustration of the problem we have had in many places. We find a friendly government which is prepared to conclude arrangements that satisfy larger US interests. We then estimate whether that government is likely to remain in power for the foreseeable future and is stable. If the estimate is positive, we then tend to discount the contrary views. Ethiopia, Libya, etc. all opposed the Pact. I remember writing something for USIA's house organ at one time on the problem that an information services faces when US policies are tied to a government not popular and whose perception of the United States was warped by that fact, recognizing that the information service's job was to sell US policies. I have seen that situation many times.

I encountered another example of this dilemma in Iraq. We worked with the Iraqi government and the British to conceive an economic development program, using Iraq's oil revenues. From a Western point of view, this program was a model of planning and interaction with a foreign government. We had a very fine American member of the Development Board, Wesley Nelson. He had been one of the engineers who had worked on the construction of the Hoover Dam. The focal point of the development program was the recreation of the irrigation systems and water control systems that had been destroyed in the 10th and 11th Centuries. Three major dams were started and built in northern Iraq. But neither journalists or educators in Baghdad would go to visit the sites; they showed no

interest because they were firmly convinced that the dams were being built by British and Americans as a way to re-occupy Iraq. I went to a newspaper man one day. He had just written an article about how the British and Americans had built barracks for their troops in Darbandi Khan in the Kurdish area. The Kurdish situation was already explosive at that time. These British and American troops would then re-occupy Iraq. I told him that we were not building any barracks there, but were building a dam which would benefit Iraq. I asked him to pick any day in the next few months and I said that I would fly him to the area to show him what was really going on. He prattled a bit and then said that he didn't really want to know what was going on. He said his job as a journalist was to embarrass and harass the government until it fell. He did not want to be bothered by the facts.

Q: How was it dealing with the Iraqi press?

NEWSOM: The Iraqi journalists were mostly “hired guns” who were being paid to plant stories or to keep some stories out of the press. The press was free to some extent, but it was a manipulated one. Sometime, the outcome was rather curious. One day, I was in a conversation with Nuri Said right after a large student demonstration. I suggested that he was being remarkably tolerant of the demonstrations. He said that he didn't want to suppress them because one couldn't be sure that when out of office one might not need their support. On the other hand, when the Russian tanks were suppressing the uprisings in East Berlin in 1953, I went to an Iraqi official in the Foreign Ministry and pointed out that this was a perfect example of Communist repression. I asked whether this deplorable situation might not be given greater publicity in Iraq. He turned the suggestion down because he did not want to give any ideas to any part of the Iraqi population which might wish to rise against the government. So the Iraqi government stood on both sides of the demonstrations issue.

Q: Did USIS ever get involved in purchasing space for its own news stories?

NEWSOM: USIS did not then nor do I think it ever has. Even then, I think CIA was probably doing some of it. The Soviets certainly were. They were very active. I got to know my Soviet information counterpart. He never acknowledged buying space or reporters, but I think they did so primarily through providing printing supplies and equipment. We gave people books. We would entertain journalists by showing them films and so forth. In the Iraqi society, there was an understanding that if a person was entertained, he then was under some obligation to his host to view him favorably. No money ever passed. It was of course for that reason that a lot of journalists would not come to our functions. They didn't want to be tainted by identification with the US Embassy nor did they want to feel obligated.

Q: Were there any American correspondents assigned to Baghdad?

NEWSOM: There were no correspondents permanently stationed there. There was a stringer for the AP who was also the editor of the English language newspaper. His name was Anderson. There were occasional visits by newspaper people. Dorothy Thompson came through once for a visit. She was part of a group that was studying our policy toward Israel and the attitude of the Arab world towards that policy. I don't recall any great US press attention at the time to events in Iraq. The Thompson group was the beginnings of a group later called “The American Friends of the Middle East” which was funded by CIA, as was divulged later on. It tried to promote a better image of the US in the Arab world despite our support for Israel. I remember one classic remark made by a woman, Mrs. Sellers, who was one the founders of this group. One time when she came to Baghdad, she was arrested for taking a picture of a bridge over the Tigris River. I went to get her out of jail and as we walked away, she said to me : “You know the Arabs are the most difficult people to be the friends of!”.

While we in the Embassy may have had doubts about our policy of weaning Iraq away from its preoccupation with the Arab cause, this issue was not debated very much in the American media.

Q: How was the Baghdad Embassy staffed? Were the personnel primarily "Arabists"? How did the Embassy view the situation?

NEWSOM: I served under three ambassadors in Iraq. When I first arrived, it was Edward Crocker, whose experience had been largely European. Then came Burton Berry, whose experience had been in the Balkans and Turkey. He was followed by Waldemar Gallman, whose experience was also largely European. He had been our Ambassador to Poland and South Africa before being appointed to Iraq. Prior to Crocker, we had ambassadors who were experts in the area, like George Wadsworth and Loy Henderson. During my tour, the emphasis was more on the Cold War and the development of a security relationship. The Deputy Chief of Mission for most of my tour was Philip Ireland, who had had considerable service in the area. Hermann Eilts, of course, was and still is, one of the leading experts in the Arab world. There were several others who had had tours in other Arab countries. We had several who spoke very good Arabic. So the staff was strong in its regional knowledge, even though the ambassadors while I was there were not Arab affairs experts.

Q: I have been told that the relationships between Ireland and Gallman were not very good. Is that true?

NEWSOM: The relationships between Gallman and all of his section chiefs were not good. I personally found myself in the most difficult circumstance I have ever encountered. As I have said, I was the Public Affairs officer which was regarded as the Number 3 position in the Embassy. Burt Berry, a very mercurial man, was the Ambassador. Ireland was on home leave, touring Europe. Berry had to go to a Chief of Mission conference in Amman or Cairo. Ireland was due to return while Berry was away. Berry called me in to tell me that

it was not the custom in the Foreign Service to change Charg#s while the Ambassador was absent from his post. Therefore, he said, that even if Ireland returned, he wanted me to remain Charg#. I told him that would be very difficult. He agreed, but insisted that it be that way. He left me written instructions which required that I remain Charg# in his absence. Approximately ten days of such an awkward situation passed with Ireland remaining in his house when Mrs. Ireland, one of the old school wives, called my wife to say that although I was Charg#, that did not mean that she was the “First Lady” at the post. That was a very difficult period for the Newsoms. Ireland knew the area. I later found out that the reason Berry had done what he did is because the Embassy had begun to receive mail for Ireland from various parts of Europe addressed to “The Honorable Philip Ireland, United States Ambassador”. That did not sit too well with Berry.

I should add a word about the Foreign Service of the period from 1947 to the early '50s. The Service went through a tremendous expansion from something like 750 officers to close 3000. That meant that both in the Department and the field there were officers quite junior who were assigned large responsibilities. If you look at the careers of some who became Chiefs of Mission and key Departmental officials in the '60s and '70s, you will find that many came from NEA and EA — areas that had suddenly emerged as important — where the Service did not have enough experts. So young people were given assignments with great responsibilities and were able to acquire great experiences very early in their careers. That stood them in good stead in later years.

Q: That was done at the cost of much resentment of the older officers who had waited so long for their opportunities. It was a period much like the Army and the Navy faced during World War II.

NEWSOM: Quite true. But there were officers of the “old school” who were fine people with very good experience, but who could not bring themselves into the new world. Many felt alienated from what was happening in the late '40s, '50s and '60s.

Q: How did the Ambassadors you worked for relate to Iraq? Were the Arab experts wary?

NEWSOM: The Crockers — he was Marshall Green's father in law — were very traditional. They felt that their responsibility was primarily to relate to the Iraqi Royal family and much less to the broader population. I remember when King George VI died. Mrs. Crocker wanted all Embassy officers to wear black ties as a sign of mourning because that was what the Iraqi court was doing. I, as Public Affairs officer, felt that was just what we did not want to do since we were trying to disassociate ourselves from the British and the ruling family. So I didn't wear one when I was working downtown. I took one along which I put on if I had to go to the Embassy. That was a decision made out of the tradition of relating not to the population, but to the nominal head of state. Berry was broader in his perspective because he had served in the area and was a shrewd political analyst. He was bitter about the Service because he felt that he been badly treated by a Foreign Service Inspector, Merle Cochran. Berry retired after his tour in Baghdad after delivering a bitter diatribe against the Department in a despatch that he permitted me to read. Gallman was very much a professional. He was there to do the job that had been assigned to him by Dulles, namely to build the Baghdad Pact. I am sure that he was not unaware of what we were facing. He has written a book on Nuri Said because he was in Baghdad when Said and the King were killed. That book reflects more surprise at events which would not have been the case had he been more understanding of the currents that were flowing beneath the surface. But that brings me back to a basic dilemma faced by many Foreign Service professionals. Even if he had detected the turmoil under the surface, should he have stopped his efforts which he was carrying on under instructions even if he recognized the risks involved? We have faced the same issues in many other places.

Q: During this period, what were your views and those of your colleagues towards our Israel policy? Was there a view that this policy was not in the best interest of the US as for example Loy Henderson believed?

NEWSOM: Having dealt with the Arab world for several years by this time, I was very conscious of the very difficult problem of avoiding parochialism on this issue, just as it was difficult in Pakistan to avoid parochialism on the Kashmir issue. Some in the Embassy became very emotional in their view that the US was on the wrong side of the Arab-Israeli issue. The credibility of the Foreign Service and of the Arab specialists particularly has suffered because so many of them became emotionally involved in the issue. I felt then, and even more strongly later when I served in the Department, that the US policy had developed from a variety of domestic circumstances and therefore as a representative of the US, I had to understand it and to extent possible try to explain it, if not defend it. That is what diplomacy is about.

It was a highly emotional issue in Baghdad in those days and remains so even today particularly for those who served in the region for extended periods. I don't think our basic national orientation on the issue is going to change very much, although Mr. Baker has shown greater guts on the issue than most of his predecessors.

I thought the best tactic was to avoid a discussion of the issue because there was absolutely no support for the US position. You could expect to be drawn into contentious discussions often and I felt it was wrong to apologize for US policy or to walk away from it; I tried to explain that the policy grew not only out of domestic political pressures from the Jewish community, which was the conventional Arab point of view, but that there was considerably sympathy for the Jews round the world as a consequence of the Holocaust. In addition, there was a lot of non-Jewish support for the democratic state of Israel as fulfillment of Biblical prophecies — in the Bible belt in the middle west, for example. Sometimes, you could explain those rationales to people, but it was still best to avoid discussions of the issue entirely. One day, a prominent American journalist came to Iraq and called on the Foreign Minister, Fahd Jamali. Jamali had defended the Arab cause in the U.N. for many years and was very adamant about it. I briefed the journalist on that and warned him that the Minister would regale him for the first forty-five minutes about

the perfidy of the US in its support of Israel. I suggested he should be prepared for that. The journalist nodded. Sure enough, after a few minutes of the usual pleasantries, Jamali started in with his speech about Palestine belonging to the Arabs. The American put up his hands and said: “I didn't come here to talk about history. I came here to talk about Iraq today. Let start with that!”. That really set Jamali back. Unfortunately, a diplomat could not have been that blunt!

Q: How did you find it dealing with Iraqi officials?

NEWSOM: They were friendly, but they had their sensitivities. One of the areas which presented interesting challenges was the educational exchange program. The Fulbright program started while I was serving in Iraq. That program required that a binational committee be established which would review the applications for overseas scholarships. But the Minister of Education at the time, Kuhil Kennah, felt that scholarships to study abroad were a form of political patronage. Therefore, he did not want a commission to block him if he wanted to give a scholarship to one of his nephews or to one of the Prime Minister's relatives. So we had a constant discussion on that matter. Dealing with Iraqi officials at that time was particularly difficult except for the Foreign Ministry or perhaps the Prime Minister's office. there were always people sitting around in a Minister's office — not outside, but in the office itself. They sat there drinking coffee and chatting. If you called on a Minister, the conversation was very public with a number of people listening in. Private conversations with Ministers in their offices were rare and hard to achieve.

It was a very social post. You met Ministers and other officials at frequent parties. You could reach out; it was not always easy, but I tried it. I met with people who belonged to the opposition or who at least were not part of the government, such as University professors. I used to listen to them which was perhaps one reason why I had a somewhat different perspective on the Iraqi attitude towards our policy. I heard people who were not part of the formal power structure. I felt that from a professional point of view the position o Public affairs officer in Baghdad was perhaps the most valuable one that I ever occupied

because I had a degree of independence and I had management responsibilities — personnel and budget — which was a rare opportunity for a Foreign Service officer at that level. I had a staff of 7 Americans and forty locals which was a large office particularly for the Foreign Service at the time. So it was good experience. I also had the opportunity to travel in the country and to meet people who did not necessarily reflect the official position of the government in Baghdad.

Q: You were in Baghdad in 1952 when Mossadegh was overthrown in Iran by a CIA operation. How was that received in Iraq?

NEWSOM: We were involved in that event, although I was not fully aware of it at the time. I met a number of the people that were involved in the Iranian events. They passed through Baghdad. I had known Archie Roosevelt because we had been reporters together in 1940 on the San Francisco Chronicle. He and his cousin Kim worked together for the CIA. So I saw Archie frequently as he traveled to and from Tehran. Of course, I didn't know until later the degree of our involvement in the Iranian events. One day, probably in late 52, Ambassador Berry called me to tell me that I should know that the Shah of Iran was in Baghdad. He had just flown in from Tehran, piloting his own plane, on his way into exile in Rome. He had been overthrown in Tehran. Berry learned about the Shah's presence from the shoe-shine man in the Eliah Club, which was the Club in Iran at the time. When he had returned to the Embassy, he received a call from the Foreign Ministry telling him that something very secret had happened and asked him to come to the Foreign Ministry to be briefed. So Berry learned about the Shah for a second time.

The Shah stayed a days or so in Baghdad and then went on to Rome. A few weeks later, the counter-revolution took place in Tehran and the Shah came through Baghdad once again. We had a very flamboyant Iranian Ambassador in Baghdad at the time who had sided with Mossadegh after the Shah's overthrow. When the Shah got off the plane which the Shah had piloted from Rome, a Foreign Ministry official told that the Iranian

Ambassador was at the airport. The Shah was reported to have responded that he had no Ambassador in Baghdad and walked off without further adieu.

I don't think that there was a very strong Iraqi reaction to events in Iran. There may have been some concern, but I don't remember that as a factor. This was a time when the Embassy's mood was that the US could take action when its vital interests were at stake. We were a big power and I don't recall any of us having any doubts about the wisdom of our Iranian policy.

Q: What about the Iraqi military, which eventually conducted a successful coup in 1958? Did we have sufficient contact with them to know their views?

NEWSOM: The Military Attach#s and some of the Political Section had close contacts with the senior Iraqi officers, particularly a General Gazi Gaghastani. But I never had the feeling that we had very good contacts with or a real appreciation for the attitudes of the younger officers. My experience in countries such as Iraq is that the military is the most difficult part of society to get to know and particularly the colonels and lieutenant colonels. I tried while in Baghdad to get USIS activities unto military bases. They would borrow our films, but they would insist on showing them themselves. We might have provided a local technician, but the military were not very receptive to our approaches.

The Military Assistance programs and the Baghdad Pact opened some relationships with the Iraqi military, but we were inhibited to some extent by the jealousy of the British who maintained a base in Iraq and who were the principal suppliers and as well as trainers of the Iraqi military. Our Military Assistance program had to be designed so not to challenge the preeminent position of the British. We got off to a bad start because the first shipment of equipment to Iraq consisted of reconditioned pieces. I went down to Bestrew to manage the publicity for that first shipment. We were horrified when we noticed that the US markings were still visible through the thin layer of paint that had been spread across the

equipment. The Iraqi knew than that they were getting second-hand equipment and that took some of the bloom off the rose.

Q: Were you and the Embassy concerned and aware of the separatist feelings of the Kurds in the North and the Shiites in the South?

NEWSOM: We were trying to deal separately with the Kurds, although we were certainly not trying to support or foster Kurdish nationalism. That was already in existence. We did have an Kurdish-speaking officer stationed in the north. I traveled in Kurdistan and became acquainted with the Kurdish leaders. We couldn't possibly not be aware of the Kurdish independent spirit and of the Arab resentment of our policy of dealing with the Kurds. I remember one evening having a party for Ministry of Education officials in Baghdad when all of a sudden a whole group — seven or eight — Kurds dropped in on the party. We had to put them at one end of the garden while we continued with the Education officials at the other end. There was no mixing of the two groups.

The Shiites in the South made no bones about their desire for separatism. We tried to reach them. I made visits to both of their holy cities. Loy Henderson had promised an Encyclopedia Britannica to a cultural group. He wrote me from Tehran, where he was our Ambassador, and asked me to take a set down to this group because he never had a chance to get around to doing it. We had a Shiite Arab translator in the Arab, whom I asked to set up this gift ceremony. He set it up with another group with which he was friendly with a somewhat similar name. I went to the town, somewhat suspicious. I asked to see the book in which Loy Henderson had signed his name; of course, it turned out that this group didn't have it. We ultimately found the group that did have it and made the presentation. I am sure that the encyclopedia went on a dusty book- shelf and probably remained unopened till its demise. I always resented that because it cost me $180 out of the USIS' budget.

I might just mention in closing that during my tour we saw the development of the Baath Party. We were apprehensive about that development because we viewed it as a threat to the existing regime. I had a friend who was a member of the Party. Hermann and others were watching it closely. We were trying to learn as much about it as we could.

Q: This was the period of Nasser's triumphs in the Arab world. How did he play in Baghdad?

NEWSOM: The US tried to build a Middle East defense organization around Nasser. There were some very acrimonious exchanges between Ambassador Jefferson Caffery in Cairo and Ambassador Waldemar Gallman in Baghdad about the development of a Middle East defense organization. Caffery felt very strongly that we shouldn't proceed with the Baghdad Pact without Nasser's participation. He thought that was a dangerous policy. Nuri Said was very suspicious of Nasser. I don't remember there being in Baghdad the same public adulation of Nasser as I encountered in Libya later. We had mixed feelings about Nasser. In November 1952, after I had returned to Baghdad after the burning of the USIS building, I was assigned to take Senator Guy Gillette of Iowa on a trip through the Arab world and Israel. That was about nine months after the revolution in Egypt. We went to Cairo and met with the Revolutionary Council. We were greatly impressed with the group. Nasser did not particularly stand out at the time, but he was clearly one of the articulate members. We were impressed with the Council's plans for Egypt's future — bringing it into the modern world. The Council did not dwell as much as other Arab leaders did on the problem of Israel. So many Americans had the impression at the time that Egypt was being governed by a new wave of Arab leaders dedicated to modernization which if not meriting necessarily our outright support, as least should not be opposed. On the same trip, I was once again made aware of Israeli power in the American political system and its ability to impress Congress. We went to Cairo, Beirut, Damascus, Amman and to Jerusalem through the Mandelbaum Gate. We stayed at the King David Hotel. Except in Cairo, the Senator had been forced to listen to long diatribes about America's support for

Israel. By the time he got to Jerusalem, he was fed up with that standard line. We arrived at the hotel late at night and went to bed. In the morning. We went to breakfast where we met by a young man from the Israeli Foreign Ministry who welcomed the Senator to his country. He told the Senator that there were twelve people from Iowa staying at the hotel that day. He thought that the Senator might wish to meet them while he was in Jerusalem. He added that a program had been developed which would permit the Senator to meet all the key Israeli leaders, but time had been left on the schedule to permit the Senator to spend a little time with is constituents. It was like and day when compare to his experiences in Arab capitals, where we had difficulty in arranging appointments, where he had been the recipient of diatribes, where it was obvious that no attention had been given at all to the American political system; it was 180 degrees different in Jerusalem.

Q: To some observers, Iraq seemed to be the one bright hope at this time in the Middle East. It was a far more literate society than in other Arab countries. It had oil revenues and a balanced economy. How did you view Iraq by the end of your tour?

NEWSOM: When I left Libya, I was uneasy about the future and said so in writing. I don't remember doing the same thing from Baghdad, but I don't think I left Iraq with total optimism about its future because you could net help be conscious about the divisions within the country and the underlying resentment of the ruling class. So when the revolution took place on July 14, 1958, I was entirely surprised.

Q: Then you came back to a very interesting job, still in Middle East Affairs. You became Officer-in-Charge, Arabian Peninsula Affairs.

NEWSOM: Right. I think for the first few months, it was the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq. Later, Iraq was given its own desk officer because of the Baghdad Pact. That left me the Arabian Peninsula. The Office for Middle Eastern Affairs was at the time was a relatively small office. We all worked very closely together. A crisis in the general area would involve everybody. A desk officer had responsibilities then that a country director has now. In the

Bureau, there were only two deputies and the office directors were the king-pins. Fraser Wilkins came first and then Stuart Rockwell.

We went through two major crises during my tour in NE. First came the Suez crisis and then the Lebanon-Iraq crisis. To a degree that would probably be unheard of today, desk officers were dealing directly with the Secretary of State on issues. Even if your responsibilities were for the Arabian Peninsula, you might be drawn into the affairs of any other part of the Near East region just because of the need to deal with crises. At this time, the Near East Bureau covered the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Israel and Egypt. The Sudan was in NE, but I don't remember if Libya was; it had just acquired its independence. Algeria was part of France and therefore in EUR's jurisdiction. Morocco and Tunisia achieved independence in 1956. Roughly around that time, EUR set up a new deputy assistant secretary for Africa. Joe Satterthwaite was the first. The African Bureau was not created until the late '50s.

NE was really the heart of the eastern Arab world plus Israel. The “Arabian Peninsula” covered all the area from the border of Kuwait south, including Kuwait. It covered Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, the Trucial Sheikdoms — this was before the birth of the UAE — the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman, the Protectorate of Aden, and Yemen.

Q: I am sure you were involved in the Buraymi Oasis affair. What was it and what role did the Department and you specifically play in that matter?

NEWSOM: The Buraymi Oasis was an oasis of approximately nine villages south of Abu Dhabi, perhaps 200 miles. Traditionally, the allegiance of the villagers to rulers of the area had been determined by where they paid a Muslim tax (the Saccat). Three of the villages had traditionally paid it to Saudi Arabia, three to the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman and three to the ruler of Abu Dhabi. In the early 1950s, the often bitter division between the British and Americans over the exploration rights to Gulf oil was still very much alive. I have forgotten what triggered the Oasis dispute because I came into at

about mid-point. Saudi Arabia, by some construction of where people paid taxes, laid claim to all of the Oasis. The Arabian-American Oil Company (ARAMCO) which was a combine of Standard of New York, Standard of New Jersey, Texaco and Standard of California had an Arab research department that became the research arm of the Saudi Arabian government in support to its claim to the Oasis. Leading the ARAMCO effort was George Renze, who wrote a lot of the material supporting the Saudi claim. He was strongly supported by James Terry Duce, the ARAMCO Vice President for governmental affairs. Their involvement in this matter was bitterly resented not only by the British, but also by two of the partner companies who were also members of the Iraq petroleum consortium which was allied to British Petroleum and Companie General Petrolium of France. These two companies had concessions in the Gulf. By the time I got on the desk, the dispute over the Oasis had been referred to international arbitration. This tribunal was headed by Sir Reeder Buller, a Britisher. The tribunal had memorials presented to it. The Saudi tribunal member was a Syrian, Sheik Yussuf Yassin, who was one of the four senior counselors to King Abdulla. The British accused the Saudis of trying to subvert the tribunal through bribery. The Saudis in turn, accused the ruler of Abu Dhabi of doing the same thing. The American government was sort of in the middle of all this. My Office, soon after I came on board, saw a constant stream of Duce and George Rentz and their attorneys, representatives of the British Embassy, Secony, Mobil and Standard of New Jersey (later ESSO), all trying to give their views. We were trying to stay out of it so we could be in the middle.

One day, after Duce had been in, I got a call soon thereafter from the Vice President of Standard of New Jersey, asking whether Duce had been in to see me. That was an interesting question since Duce was the Vice President of one of Standard's subsidiaries. I acknowledged that Duce had been in. The Vice President then said that I was not to pay any attention to Duce because his position did not represent Standard's. So were hearing from all sides.

In what I always felt was somewhat of precursor to later Suez events, the British got fed up with the tribunal and in October, 1955, the Omani scouts moved in and took over all of the Saudi claimed three villages. The Omanis then asserted dominance over the whole Oasis. Saudi Arabia broke relationships with the British which were not re-established for many years.

There was also another Saudi dispute with Abu Dhabi over a small parcel of land near the coast between Qatar and what is now the UAE. Ultimately, the Saudis lost that dispute. The British-Saudi relations were very bad at the time. The British considered that Faisal, who was first the Foreign Minister and later the King, was very pro-Nasser.

I had another interesting experience during this period. Until 1956, that is pre-Suez crisis, we had not had a resident mission in Yemen. We dealt with Yemen from our Embassy in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The Capital of the Kingdom of Yemen was not in Sanaa at the time, but in Ta'izz, which was in the south. The Imam of Yemen did not trust the northern tribes and tried to isolate them from the rest of the world. Because of rumors of Soviet and Romanian efforts to find oil in Yemen, we wanted to open a resident mission. Ambassador George Wadsworth was sent from Jeddah to see whether a mission could be opened. He ran into some obstacles that we in Washington were not quite able to understand. I was asked to go to Ta'izz to see whether I could get a mission opened. Mike Sterner, at the time a member of the Aden Consulate staff, along with his wife Coco and a Aden local employee and I made the trip by land rover to Ta'izz. It was 110 kilometers and took us eleven hours. It was a very bad road over British territory. Although I had a visa for Yemen issued by the Yemeni legation in Washington, I was told in Aden that it was not valid and that I would have to get the personal approval by the Imam to enter Yemen. The personal permission consisted of a little piece of paper torn out of a notebook, on which, in Arabic, the Imam's representative in Yemen had scribbled something. With that note, we entered the country.

Dick Seiner wrote a book on Yemen, which he began by saying that Yemen was rushing head-long into the 13th. Century. That was a long time ago. When you went to Ta'izz, you stayed only at the Imam's guest house; there were no other accommodations. And that was third rate flop-house. One room had brocade furniture in it; that was the VIP room. I did not get that one. Mike, Coco and I stayed at the guest house. We met with a marvelous Yemeni, who was the vice-Foreign Minister. We met sitting in the lounge of the guest house. We must have met three or four times. I explained our interest in opening a legation in Yemen. After the second or third meeting, I said to Mohammed, the Aden Arab we had brought with us, that there must be something about our discussions that I was missing. I thought there was a hidden impediment and if I could find out what that was, maybe we could overcome it. Mohammed said:" It is the village." I didn't understand. He explained that as we sat in the lounge looking through the window, we could see a village on a hill. He said that when Ambassador Wadsworth was here previously, he talked to the Vice-Minister and told him that the US wanted to build the finest legation in Ta'izz and pointed to that village as being a marvelous location for the US Legation. Mohammed said that the Yemenis didn't want to move the village. So in my next conversation with the Vice-Minister, I told him that I understood what the problem was. Our great Ambassador from Jeddah had very expansive ideas — in fact, Wadsworth ran an Embassy like a royal court. I told the Vice-Minister that the US government had no intention of making Yemen move its villages and that we would build or occupy any land or building that the Government of Yemen wished us o occupy. That overcame the impediment and we subsequently opened a resident mission in Ta'izz.

You couldn't leave Ta'izz without the Imam's permission. The gates of the city were locked at night. Also, as we drove into Ta'izz, we passed through a narrow gorge; as we looked up, there we saw a huge boulder teetering on a precipice. I was told that the boulder was there to that is the Imam wanted to block the road, it could be done very easily by pushing the bolder down the hill-side. The Imam had two DC-3s flown by Swedish pilots. That was the only air transportation in and out of Ta'izz. At the time in Ta'izz was French

diplomat, Roger Lascos, living in the brocade room in the guest house. He had been in Yemen before in 1947 to negotiate a highway contract. He wanted to go north to renew acquaintances with some people he had met on his previous trip to Yemen. He put in a request for a ride on one of the DC-3s, but got no answer for several days. Finally, one day he was told he could fly to Sanaa. That he did and was met by a representative of the government and taken to the guest house there. He told that representative whom he wanted to see. That seemed to be no problem, but first he had to pay his respects to the governor. Unfortunately, the governor was out of town, but the Frenchman could see him as soon as he returned. So he waited for several days. One morning, there was a knock on the door and someone announced that the plane to take him back to Ta'izz was ready and waiting. He said that he had not seen anyone, but was told that it was the Imam's wish that he return to Ta'izz. So he flew back to Ta'izz where he found out that the only reason he was given permission to fly to Sanaa was because his brocade room was required to accommodate a Chinese Communist representative who had come to call on the Imam. That was Yemen in those days.

Q: What was your evaluation of what the CHICOMs were doing in the Middle East in this period of time?

NEWSOM: The Eisenhower administration had deep concern for this matter. In looking back on it, it may have been excessive, but in the atmosphere of the time, there was deep concern for what both the Chinese and the Soviets were doing. We are talking now about a geographic area that we and the British had always considered as our primary domain. It was in 1955, that the Czech's arms deal with Nasser was revealed. We had established the Baghdad Pact. There was an intense feeling for the strategic importance of the Red Sea, the Suez Canal, the straits of Bab al Mandeb — the choke points. As the desk officer at the time, I was reflecting that policy orientation. The Chinese were effective in relating to the Yemenis with primitive technology that we couldn't match. We had problems with

the inflexibility of our assistance programs which were not suited with difficult areas like Yemen.

The Eisenhower doctrine and the Middle East resolution of 1956, partially relating to Yemen, was conceived in the Department as a means of achieving greater Congressional flexibility in the administration of assistance programs in the Middle East in the face of Chinese, Soviet and other communist efforts. Once that resolution was approved by Congress, it was then seen by the Administration as a) a way to employ a defeated Congressman — James P. Richards, Jr., who had been the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee — and b) a way for the nations of the region to stand up and be counted. Richards, with Jack Jernegan, made a trip throughout the area, to determine which countries would endorse the Eisenhower doctrine. In exchange for support, those countries would be given a share of a special appropriation of $200 million. When Richards Jernegan got to Yemen, Jack sent a telegram which started by saying that their batting average had just dropped because in Yemen, they had met with the Imam and have promised a $2 million assistance program in exchange for support of the President's doctrine. The Imam wanted to know how many countries the US team was visiting. The answer was 14. Then he wanted to know the amount appropriated by Congress. He then said that is mathematics would suggest that Yemen, on a country-by-country allocation, would be eligible for much more than $2 million. He said he wanted his “fair share”. When Jernegan explained that the amount mentioned was related to a country's capacity to absorb the aid effectively, the Imam got up and walked out. So that was the end of assistance to Yemen for the time being, at least.

Q: Tell me what was going on in Saudi Arabia in this period?

NEWSOM: Abdul Aziz died in 1953. He was succeeded by his son, Saud bin Abdul Aziz, who was a great hulk of a man with poor eyesight. He made a memorable visit to the United States in 1957. Wadsworth was still our Ambassador to Saudi at the time. The rule then, as it is still now, was that the head of state could have 12 persons with him for whom

the US government would pay expenses in Washington. Wadsworth protested that 12 was not enough for a king. We finally agreed that His Majesty could bring 40 people, but would only pay for some of them. We sent Victor Purse out to insure that no more than 40 boarded the ship that would bring the party to the United States. We did not realize that the ship would dock at Cannes where another 40 Saudis boarded. The Saudi party, by the time it reached New York was over 80 people. We had to pare that down. Blair House was occupied by the King and his immediate entourage. The rest were put in the Shoreham, except for the King's bodyguards who were bedded down in tents pitched in Lafayette Square. The Royal party was expected to stay in Washington three days; it stayed nine days. During those nine days, we negotiated an extension on our use of the Dhahran airport. Robert Murphy, then Under Secretary of State, was supposed to be our chief negotiator; Yussuf Yassin was the Saudi negotiator — the same man who handled the Oasis tribunal. After one session, Murphy decided that he didn't want any more and therefore established a drafting committee and made me the chairman. It is we who had to meet with Yassin thereafter. So I negotiated with that wily Syrian for four days and nights and managed to squeeze out another five year extension. That was the last extension. That experience was useful because I learned a lot about negotiating in those four days.

Then the whole atmosphere, which had been reasonably amicable, was marred by apparition of the Straits of Tiran which came up during the last couple of days of the King's visit. Herman Fleiger, the Department's Legal advisor — a man very close to Dulles — had been asked to render an opinion on the rights of Israeli transit of the Gulf of Aqaba waters. This came after the Suez incident. Fleiger ruled that the Straits were international waters because we at the time still supported the “three mile limit” rule. In the Straits, the three mile limit overlapped from opposite shores, but in the Gulf, there was an area which we considered international waters. Straits leading to international waters were also considered as “open” waterways. The Saudis were much opposed to this interpretation. So the ruling became a very contentious issue, but it did not fortunately interfere with the

Dhahran airport extension. We did make additional commitments to Saudi Arabia during this visit which effected our relationships ever since.

Q: How did you view the stability of the house of Saud in Saudi Arabia? I ask that question because this was the period when Nasserism was at its heights?

NEWSOM: I concluded then and I have maintained the view that as long as the sons of Abdul Aziz were still available to assume the throne in turn and as long there wasn't any competition from other branches of the family, the Saudi kingdom was relatively secure. Even the deposition of Saud and the later assassination of Faisal did not dent the cohesion of the royal family.

Saud was sad figure. He always reminded me of King Lear in a way. He was almost blind, heavy set, not very smart. I went to see him after he had been deposed. I had gotten to know him quite well during the nine days in the Blair House. When I went to see him, he was in the ARAMCO hospital, in a little room, essentially unaware of what had transpired. He had somewhat vacant stare with his semi-blind eyes. It was a very sad picture. Faisal was much impressive. His death was a tragedy. Neither Hollech or Fahd were brilliant, but they kept the kingdom together.

Q: It was during the period we are discussing that the Suez crisis erupted. William Rountree was the Assistant Secretary for the Near East. How did NEA view this situation?

NEWSOM: The first thing we noticed was that Willy Morris, who was officer in the British Embassy responsible for Middle East affairs, stopped coming to see us. That began about a week before the Suez crisis began. Some years later, while dining with Willy in London, I asked him why he stopped seeing us. He said that he was getting instructions from London which the Ambassador and the Washington Embassy staff thought were absurd. That led them to believe that something was cooking, but they didn't feel they could share their insights with us. So they decided to break contacts until the situation became clearer. We still had exchanges in London and we may have had suspicions of potential actions,

but no real evidence. Some years ago, I attended a seminar in Princeton on the “Dulles era”. Bob Amery, Bob Bowie and Douglas Dillon were there along with others who had gone through the Suez crisis. There was considerable discussion about whether the US had in fact received advance knowledge of British-French plans. Dillon, who had been our Ambassador in Paris at the time, claimed that he had warned the White House that the French would use force. Bowie, who was in Policy Planning in the Department at the time, said that there had not been any advance warning of which he was aware. At my low level, we certainly had no awareness of coming events beyond a growing realization of the bitterness that Eden felt towards Dulles. In August, 1956, I had accompanied Robert Anderson, who had been Secretary of the Treasury, with Bill Edlan of CIA on a secret mission to the Arabian Peninsula and Egypt, to try to sell the idea of a Suez Canal users association. We had stopped in London, where Dulles was trying to negotiate with the British on this idea. I became the note-taker in a meeting between Dulles and Lloyd, the Foreign Minister. I don't ever recall a meeting between two top governmental officials which was as acrimonious and cool as that one was. So even before the crisis, there was real antagonism between the British and us. So that something happened without notification to us was not entirely surprising.

We all admired the position that Eisenhower took. We were in full agreement with those British who said that the invasion was a foolhardy adventure particularly if it represented a long-term commitment to a British presence in the area. I don't think any of us, knowing what we did, felt that Nasser was going to collapse and be overthrown, which of course was the objective of British-French-Israeli policy. In retrospect, it is interesting to note that our position was probably the boldest one we ever took in support of an Arab cause and yet we realized very short-lived benefits in the Arab world from our stance.

Q: Was NEA feeling any pressure from the Israeli lobby or Congress during this period or was that pressure applied at higher levels in the Department and the White House?

NEWSOM: The Israeli lobby was in existence, but it was not the organization that AIPAC became later. Don Bergus dealt with the Israeli lobby and can answer that question more authoritatively than me. There was man named Fisher, a California oil executive, was very close to Dulles and talked to him often. Certainly Eisenhower did not pay much attention to that lobby.

Q: That raises the question of the Eisenhower-Dulles relationships which seems to be under intense scrutiny at the moment. From your view point, did you have any feeling about that relationships as it related to Middle East policy?

NEWSOM: At the time, I guess I had the feeling that Dulles was calling the shots, but as I look back on those days there was a feature of Dulles' office that I have not seen in any other Secretary of State's office. On Dulles' desk and on his conference table, where he did a lot of work, Dulles had a phone that connected directly with the Oval Office. Periodically, he used to pick it up and talk to the President, in the middle of a conference. I don't remember any other Secretary for whom I worked who had that kind of direct access or control responsibility.

One day, when Joe Satterthwaite and some of us were meeting with Dulles, that Eisenhower-Dulles phone rang. Dulles answered it and said that he didn't know, but that there was someone in the office who could answer the President's question. So he gave the phone to Satterthwaite, who said: “Enkruma! No, no. Enkruma. “N” like in “nuts”! That is right, Mr. President” and handed the phone back to Dulles”. I think in general that Eisenhower was clearly calling the shots, when he was well.

Dulles was an interesting man. He had his own ideas. I will always remember one meeting with him after my return from the Anderson mission. That was in August/September 1956. We were briefing him on our conversations in various countries. Dulles sat back and thinking out loud, said something that area of the world being very difficult and indicating some doubts that he would ever be able to understand it. I think that showed that he was

striving for certain results, he had come to the recognition that there were forces in the Middle East that he didn't fully understand.

Q: The next major event took place in July, 1958. I refer to the Iraq-Lebanon dispute. Tell us you memories of that?

NEWSOM: By that time, Iraq was no longer the responsibility of my office. I think Dick Parker was the desk officer for Iraq, but we were all involved in the handling of the Iraq revolution and its aftermath. That took place in July, 1958. I remember that I was chosen, along with Bill Macomber, to brief the Senate Foreign Relations and the House Foreign Affairs Committees every day for three weeks on events in Iraq. That was interesting for several reasons.

First, it demonstrated to me how different the perspectives of the Senate and the House were, at least in a foreign affairs crisis. The House was interested in the immediate and its impact on their home districts. The Senate was prepared to look at the longer term. At that time, you still have an executive session in the Senate without, as is the case now, having to go through a prolonged negotiation on what can be revealed and what can't be. So executive sessions could be quite open and candid. I remember especially the Senate sessions. One reason was that the Chairman was Senator Theodore Green, who was by 1958, in his dotage. He was in his '90s and lucid only for short periods of time. That made briefings a little difficult. Highboard Humphreys was on the Committee. He was alert and sharp. Because he was not trying to impress his audience, he asked very penetrating questions. Fulbright was also on the Committee, but he was angry with Dulles and at one point, stomped out of the briefings because he said that he didn't want a party to “star-chamber” proceedings. The Committees were interested in the progress of the landing of the Marines, why we were not better informed of the over-throw of the monarchy (the same question we have had to try to answer after every revolution) and the significance of that. We briefed the Committees on the Robert Murphy mission which was one of the more successful actions of American diplomacy, despite our unhappiness with our Ambassador

in Lebanon, Rob McClintock. He thought he could solve the problem, until he was quoted as saying that the Lebanese Minister of Finance could hang from the nearest tree. I was with Mr. Dulles shortly after that comment was made; the Secretary said that it was like having Babe Ruth on your team — he strikes out quite often, but every once in a while he hits a home run. Murphy negotiated a resolution of the Lebanese problem and the withdrawal of the Syrian troops. Interestingly enough, the man who asked for the troops in the first place — Camille Jamal — was not put in power, but rather a Lebanese military man was chosen as President. We couldn't reverse the revolution in Iraq — Kassam and his bloody shirt.

The only interesting sidelight that I remember of those events was the deft work of the French who managed to preserve their oil interests in Iraq. Five percent of the Iraq Petroleum Company was owned an Armenian family, Gulbenkian; the other 95% was split four ways: the French company, British Petroleum, New Jersey Standard and SOCONY Mobil. Kassam nationalized the Iraq Petroleum Company, but the French persuaded him to let them keep their shares. They then argued that were saving Western interests in Iraq because there was no way any of the other parties could maintain their interests. The French are always our staunchest allies in tough crises!

I left NEA in 1959. In the previous year, we tried to recover our interests in Iraq, but the Baghdad Pact became CENTO. The British had to withdraw from Habania — a military base they used in Iraq. The British were in general pulling our east of Suez. We believed that we had to fill that vacuum. We did that until Kissinger took over by taking some modest measures like establishing consular posts in the Gulf, beefing up slightly our naval presence in Bahrain with two AVPs (aircraft tenders — the Greenwich Bay and the Valcour). We did add also a couple of destroyers and increased the Sixth Fleet visits to the area. We wrote letters to the Kings of Saudi Arabia emphasizing our deep interest in maintaining the integrity of their country and its independence. I drafted a number of them

for Presidential signature. It is no wonder that the Saudis expected some action from us when they were threatened.

We had extensive written exchanges with the British during this period concerning the Gulf and its future. The question of military assistance to Kuwait arose because Kassam raised the Iraqi claim to Kuwait shortly after the revolution. They landed some troops in Kuwait and provided some equipment — tanks, etc. We tried to work with Kassam, but weren't very successful.

Q: At the time of the Marine landing, did we perceive Nasserism as a major threat?

NEWSOM: Certainly, but we were always a little ambivalent about Nasser. There were some, including some of our Ambassadors in Cairo, who felt that Nasser did represent a new and perhaps irreversible trend of nationalism and modernism in the arab world. We were very much influence in our attitude towards Nasser by the British who, before 1956, had a deep antipathy towards the man and his point of view. But the British government was also split. When I went to Yemen on the trip I described earlier, I spent a few days in Aden. I was privileged to attend a staff meeting chaired by the governor of Aden. Just prior to that, for the first time, the Foreign Office had assigned one of its staff members, Horace Phillips, to the Governor's staff. Phillips later became British ambassador to Saudi Arabia and other posts. I was kind of a “fly on the wall” while the Governor and Phillips debated how much of a threat Nasser was to Aden. Phillips took a much more benign view of Nasser than the Governor did.

One of the reasons why Aden became the home of a Marxist movement was when the British decided to give Aden its independence, they made a conscious choice to support the leftist labor elements because they viewed those as anti-Nasser. The opposition was Arab nationalistic and therefore less trusted by the British who had a phobia about Nasser. That explains a good deal about what happened later.

Many of the Arabs, including many Saudis, took the position that we should not be so concerned about Arab nationalism and Nasser because it was Islamic and a natural bulwark against communism. Some of us regarded that as nonsense. In fact, Islam itself is a highly authoritarian religion, but many Arabs felt that it was not a danger to Western interests. Many people in the Department espoused the same view. Nasser was a threat not only because he was close to the Soviets from whom he was receiving military equipment and training, but he was also viewed as the primary force for anti-Americanism threatening our interests in Libya, the Arabian Peninsula, Lebanon and in other parts of the area. So he was a danger to us beyond the Cold War context; he was a problem to our interests in the Middle East.

Q: One last question about this period. How did you view the so-called Arabists in the Department?

NEWSOM: I studied Arabic every work day morning in Iraq while serving there. Later, in London, while stationed there, I also took some lessons and studied the language and the culture again when I assigned to Libya. I was rated 2-2+ on the FSI scale which was satisfying for someone who never had formal training. But I was not considered an Arabist. I think that the popular view of the Arabists is very much misplaced. Many of those who dealt consistently with the Arab world — I refer specifically to many of my colleges who were in NE at this time — were very critical of and in many cases, completely turned off, by the Arab governments then in power. They did recognize that US interests would not be served by a complete alienation of the Arab world. The Middle East specialists made themselves vulnerable to charges of parochialism and bias when, during Congressional testimony and briefings, they tried to explain how the Arab world looked at the creation of Israel and how it looked at American policy towards Israel. There were many pro-Israeli people who were simply not prepared to have that point of view expressed. So the Middle East specialist was in a very uncomfortable position. A canard grew that American policy was not more favorable to Israel because of a cabal of Arabists in the

State Department. The reason that the policy has not been more favorable, as the current Bush administration is demonstrating — an administration that has relied very little on the Arabists — is because of the perception of where US interests lie.

Q: You left your NEA position in 1959. Then you went to the War College for a year. Was that a valuable experience?

NEWSOM: Yes. It certainly gave me a better appreciation of the military point of view. The contacts I made and the perceptions I gained were of great value in jobs I held later. In London, I held the Middle East “portfolio”; I was also the Political Adviser to the CINC of CINCNELM, a command that has subsequently been dissolved. That command covered the Mediterranean and all the land to India. I traveled with him. My War College experience was very valuable. The first time I went to see Admiral Smith, he told me that he did not take orders from the Department of State, but was quite willing to look at and probably accept any sensible analysis that I might present. I fully understood, in light my year at the War College, the state of the mind I was dealing with.

The contacts I made during the year at the College were both personally satisfying and professionally very helpful. David Jones was at the War College when I was there. We met again when I was Under Secretary and he was the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. Our personal relationships allowed us to cut through an enormous amount of potential red tape. Russ Daugherty, also a classmate, later became CINC, US Air Forces-Europe when I was in Libya. We were then concerned about Wheelus Air Force base. So the year at the War College was very valuable.

Q: You were in London from 1960 to 1962. What were your responsibilities?

NEWSOM: Ever since the end of World War II, we had a job in London to be filled by an officer with Middle East experience to deal with the British Foreign Office and other British Ministries on Middle East issues. Similarly, the British have a Middle East expert in their Embassy in Washington. My job was to follow events in that region, keep in touch

with Foreign Office officials and report in their views. I arranged for briefings for American officials who were going to the area and who wanted to meet British officials. I kept in contact with some British journalists and academics who dealt with the Middle East. That gave me a sense how various segments of British society viewed events important to us and allowed me introduce interested Americans to those circles. As I mentioned, I traveled to the region with Admiral Smith, probably twice or three times during my tour.

Then by a curious set of circumstances, I also became involved in Africa. We did have an African expert in the Embassy, Fred Hutzel. The early '60s were very active years in US-British relations on African concerns because this was the period when African countries were beginning their journey to and of independence. The Rhodesian issue first arose during this period. Fred was detailed as Political adviser to a Naval Task Force which was making a series of good will visits on the West African coast. One day, a Portuguese ocean liner — the Santa Rosa — was hijacked. The ship to which Fred was assigned was detached from the flotilla to move as rapidly as possible to intercept the Santa Rosa. Then Fred was off-loaded in Recife, Brazil and was ill for several weeks. During that period, the Congo crisis erupted in which the British were very interested. So I was thrown into African affairs until Fred could return. I got to know G. Mennen “Soapy” Williams, the then Assistant Secretary for African Affairs and Wayne Fredericks, his deputy.

I was supposed to go to Cairo as DCM after my London tour. It was a job that I was very interested in. Governor Williams asked me if I would like to return to Washington to work in the African Bureau. I told him I would prefer Cairo. Of course, the next word from the Department was that I had been appointed as Deputy Director for the Office of North African Affairs.

Q: Before we move to that, I would like to hear you compare the British and American views of the Middle East in the early '60s.

NEWSOM: We are now discussing a period which was only four years after Suez. There was still considerable bitterness, particularly among Conservative MPs. I remember making a speech on US Middle East policy to the Chelsea Conservative Society. I was roundly heckled who had a very different view of what that policy should have been. In the Foreign Office, I encountered a very friendly and sympathetic attitude towards cooperation and towards our view of the Middle East. We did have somewhat different views on Nasser which became central t our discussions of Saudi Arabia. The British, which had broken relations with Saudi Arabia, were very suspicious of Faisal. We were encouraging them to take another look at that. The Foreign Office and British military were very suspicious of our growing activities in the Gulf and particularly what we were doing in Muscat and Oman. That had been a British province. We struck some raw nerves when we began to discuss the sale of some military equipment to Gulf countries. The equipment meant military advisors, who then were also asked for views on large military contracts. The British saw these factors as threatening to their position in the area.

We were also at the beginning of the Kennedy administration and not all of the British were enthusiastic about the definite Kennedy tilt towards the new independence movements in Africa. During the early '60s, the Lancaster House negotiations on Kenya independence took place. We followed that closely. Within the Embassy, there was a generational spilt. The Political Counselor was Elim O'Shaughnessy. His view of the world stopped at Belgrade, where he had been DCM. South and East of there was of no consequence. Once, I took a long airgram to him which analyzed the British views of the future of Saudi Arabia. Elim looked at it and said: “David, does anybody give a damn about what happens in Saudi Arabia?” London was a great experience which made me much more aware why our conduct of foreign affairs is so much more complicated than the British process and that of other countries probably. They do not have to deal with the Parliament as we have to deal with the Congress. The government is part of Parliament, in effect. They do have a “Question hour” but for example no serious budgetary hearings, or no restrictions on the management of their assistance programs. When you consider what a desk officer

in the Department has to take into account in pursuing an initiative and the number of people he has to negotiate with compared to an equivalent Foreign Office official, you can see the enormous difference. That in part explains why we need 80 people in and aid mission overseas while the British need only four or five. We have just so many more constituencies to satisfy.

Q: Was there similar split in Great Britain between the foreign affairs specialists and the political leadership as there was in the United States? The literature is replete with writings by and about the British Foreign Service's pro-Arab bias, particularly for the desert Arabs. Did you find that to be true and what were the Parliamentarians' views?

NEWSOM: The Suez crisis demonstrated the split between the British who had experience in the region and at least some of the politicians. That split was still visible in the early '60s. The authors of the often romantic stories and books about the Middle East were rarely promoted to policy making levels in the British Foreign Office. The British had some superb “Arabists” at the higher policy levels, but they were not parochial advocates. One of them was Donald Maitland, who was with us in Baghdad and later became the British Ambassador to the EC and later to UN and after that Under Secretary of the Department of Energy — one of the rare Foreign Service officers to serve in a domestic Department in London. He had started as Consul in Al Amhara between Basra and Baghdad. He had the most superb knowledge of Iraqi society, the family linkages, etc. He spoke superb Arabic. He never lost his slightly caustic objectivity towards the people of the Middle East. The best in any professional service maintain a certain psychological distance from their the societies they have studies and know well.

Q: When the Kennedy administration took over, did you detect any change in our Middle East policy?

NEWSOM: The Kennedy administration seemed to be the only post-war administration that was not involved in a serious effort to resolve the Arab-Israel dispute. I should have

mentioned, when talking about Secretary Dulles, the ALFA program, which was a secret effort sponsored by Dulles to see if a package of compensation for land lost, voluntary repatriation and adjustment of borders would not provide a base for Middle East peace. Dulles decided, on August 26, 1955, that his program was going anywhere; so he made his proposals public in a speech which brought the effort to an end. I don't recall Kennedy making any similar effort. The next major effort came out of the LBJ administration with Resolution 242. The Kennedy period was not very active.

One thing did happen although I was not directly involved. Until about 1960, the US was not a major supplier of arms to Israel or to any country in the area. The tripartite declaration was still theoretically in effect which limited France, Great Britain and the United States in their military assistance programs in the area. By the early 60, there were already transactions made that were perhaps not in the spirit of the agreement, although they were not a serious problem at the time.

Q: You then left London to serve in Washington from 1962-65, first as deputy director of the Office for Northern African Affairs, as you mentioned earlier.

NEWSOM: Correct. My boss was Bill Whitman. In 1963, I became the director of the Office until 1965. At that time, the Bureau embraced all of Africa except Egypt. Our Office covered Morocco, Mauritania, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia.

Q: Let me start by asking for your impressions of Governor "Soapy" Williams and Wayne Fredericks.

NEWSOM: "Soapy" took the job took the job believing that Africa was a black political precinct as he knew in Detroit, which would be of political benefit to him in his future career. "Soapy" was smart enough to realize that that was not the case after about a year as Assistant Secretary. He recognized that circumstances were entirely different and he adjusted well. On balance, while he made excessive commitments and was somewhat unrealistic in his views o what the United States could do in Africa. He did put

the United States on the map in an important way. He and Charles Diggs, a Congressman and the Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, paid attention to the African countries as they were emerging into independence. They created an awareness in the US of its interests in Africa which provided an important base for future developments.

Wayne Fredericks was an earnest advocate for Africa and black Africa in particular. He had worked in South Africa as a representative of Kellogg Mills and had come away with a deep aversion to apartheid. He had great sympathy particularly for the Anglo-phone Africans. One of the aspects of American policy in the early '60s was that more often than not we paid more attention to Anglo-phone Africa than we did to Franco-phone Africa. Our language commonality made communications easier. The African black community paid essentially no attention to Franco-phone Africa and that influenced US official views.

But “Soapy”, more than Wayne, tried to establish links with Franco-phone Africa, even though his French was not very good, but he gave it a valiant try. Even with difficult leaders like Sekou Toure of Guinea, he tried to establish a relationship. He has been criticized for establishing resident Embassies in every individual African country. He felt very strongly about that and I believe that has been helpful in maintaining an American presence and interest in even those countries where we had nothing else to offer. I took over from “Soapy” as Assistant Secretary in 1969 at a time when Congress had revolted against what it viewed as excessive commitment to Africa. It placed a limit to ten countries to which we could give economic assistance. It fell to me to give the bad news to those countries that didn't fall among the top ten and force those countries to have more realistic understanding of US capabilities. That made me even more conscious of the big dreams that “Soapy” created in Africa, but on balance I believe that it was important in this period of emerging nations.

Q: It seems to me that often the “outsider”, naive about Washington, by waiving a 2x4 can get things done that a more professional Foreign Service Officer could never accomplish.

NEWSOM: There is something to that, particularly when the newcomer has a relationship to the political process. The trouble with “Soapy” was that he didn't have nearly as much clout in the political process as he had hoped to have. They gave him a sop and hoped that he wouldn't bother them thereafter. He didn't really have a close relationship to the political power brokers in Washington. Despite that, he got a lot more attention for Africa that a professional would have.

Q: How did Williams relate to Chester Bowles, George Ball and other senior Departmental officials?

NEWSOM: Not very effectively. They were forced to consider him part of the team, but I never had the feeling that he had a lot of clout. They may have viewed him as a “lightweight”, but in any case there were issues that were more important to the administration in its early years, like the US-Soviet relationships, arms control discussions, the Cuba missile crisis. Africa just wasn't on their scope. “Soapy” had more clout with the people around LBJ than he did with the Kennedy people.

In retrospect, it is often amazing what issues took a lot of the bureaucracy's time. One was the Tanzam railway — the Tanzania-Zambia railway — which the Chinese were building. “Soapy” and Wayne made valiant efforts to try to get the US to match that effort with a highway or some other large project or to make a better offer. The Chinese proposal was considered a serious threat to the integrity of our interests in Southern Africa. The conservatives, like the Rhodesian lobby, which was a power at the time used to come to see me with maps, showing red arrows pointing at the heat of Southern Africa. It was issues like that which loomed large at the time.

I was fortunate in my job as chief of the Northern Africa Office because “Soapy” had very little interest in that part of the region. Somewhere along the line, I was asked to become involved in some draft papers on regional policies. That allowed me to accompany “Soapy” to a meeting he had with Averell Harriman on the Tanzam railway. “Soapy” said that

perhaps we could find some funding for a highway which could, in the last analysis, be more economical that a railroad. Harriman said that perhaps Williams with his background may think so, but that he didn't! (Harriman being a scion of a great railroad family).

Northern Africa was an exciting place during this period. The independence of Tunisia and Morocco were already accomplished facts, but Algeria was striving for its own statehood. I visited Algiers on Independence Day and I was stayed with Bill Porter, who was one of our great diplomats who managed remarkably to be Consul General under the French and soon thereafter, our Ambassador to the newly independent nation of Algeria, who accepted him without hesitation. The French disliked him intensely because when he had been Director for Northern African Affairs some years earlier, he had made a point of making contact with the FLN and other Algerian pro-independence groups.

Developing the confidence of the new Algerian government was very difficult. It viewed us with some suspicion because it felt that we had supported the French in the war for independence. Our main interest in the '60s was to deliver food aid to Algeria and to Egypt. Both were difficult because just as we were on the verge of getting approval for both programs, Nasser made a speech refusing our aid and telling us to “drink up the Red Sea”. That in fact killed both programs because they were closely related in that the assistance was destined to countries which were not in “our camp” and therefore there was considerable opposition. A program for Egypt was a little easier to get approval because there was a good feeling towards Egypt as a country; the opposition was anti-Nasser. So we tried to piggy-back the Algerian program on the Egypt one, but when the latter could not be developed, the former also fell through.

Q: Was President Kennedy interested in Algeria? I believe that as a Senator he was the first prominent American politician to speak out on the matter.

NEWSOM: That is right. He was a great hero in Algeria. He had an interest in Algeria after becoming President, but it went sour during a Ben Bella visit to Washington. He had

become the first President of Algeria. In October, just before the Cuban missile crisis, he came to Washington and from there went directly to Havana. That upset Kennedy and his people. Kennedy didn't pay much attention to Algeria after that.

The other big issue in this time period was the Horn of Africa. Somalia became independent in 1960. There were growing tensions between Ethiopia and Somalia. The Soviets were beginning to show interest in Somalia. Our interests in Ethiopia, fostered by an Army communication station in Cagnew, Asmara, were in part derivative from an emotional US attachment to Ethiopia for sending some of their troops to Korea — one of the few countries to do so. I spent a substantial amount of my time on Ethiopia. I worried at times about the Emperor's succession which was not a particularly popular issue especially with Haile Selassie. I spent endless hours trying to figure out solutions to reduce Somali-Ethiopian tensions. I looked at previous border agreements between Italy and Great Britain.

Q: Were we in a position at the time of not being able to do something for Somalia because it would alienate Ethiopia and vice-versa?

NEWSOM: That was the situation. Ethiopia did have priority because of the Army installation in Asmara. I think we polarized the situation to some degree. About 1965, a curious thing happened. We were assuming that Somalia would end up being a Soviet puppet and therefore we were giving increasingly greater support to Ethiopia. Jacob Malik, then the Soviet representative at the U.N., took a trip to Addis. At the time or soon thereafter, the Soviets gave the Ethiopians a $100 million dollar line of credit to build a hospital and a few other things. In retrospect, I now think that they were smarter than we were because they were hedging their bets in the Horn and not putting all their chips on one country.

Q: Tell us a little about Morocco. Did we still have Air Force bases there at that time?

NEWSOM: We were phasing them out. We were negotiating a withdrawal from all of the bases, which were maintain essentially for the use of B-47s — a medium range strategic bomber. When President Eisenhower had stopped in Morocco in the late '50s, he made what the Moroccans considered a commitment to phase out the bases once longer range bombers became the back-bone of our air fleet. By the time I took over Northern African Affairs, we had already abandoned a couple of the bases. We were committed to rebuild Nouasseur, which was the largest base, into a major civilian airport for Casablanca. I was involved in those negotiations which were difficult because the Air Force was feeling that it was being pushed out of a base and didn't really have any interest in helping the Moroccans. Our assistance agency had very little interest because it didn't have money it wanted to spend on airports. The issue became more complicated because when we pulled back from protection of the parameters of the base, the Moroccans stole everything that they could get their hands on. I was dealing with a very profane Under Secretary of the Air Force for Logistics — Phil Hilbert, who I had known quite well because we had worked on the Dhahran issues and other matters previously. He was constantly trying to tell me that those “ragheads out there” didn't know how to run a base and if the Air Force was going to be kicked out, you couldn't expect it to care what happened hereafter. He used to keep constantly informed about the latest thieveries and deprivations. He called me one morning to tell me that the Moroccans had stolen a generator and a water pump out of a small brick pump house. He said furthermore, they had dismantled the house brick by brick and that there wasn't a trace of it left. He said he couldn't understand why I thought that these people should be helped. It was a constant fight. Of course, our Air Force was also moving material out even though we were obliged to leave it all behind.

Q: What were our views of Morocco and King Hussein?

NEWSOM: He was our friend. He was and probably still is one of the most difficult friends that we have. Prior to my time as Director of North African Affairs, the King had canceled at least one invitation to visit the United States. That was during the Eisenhower period

because he couldn't give the President a horse or some other silly reason as that. He did come on a visit while I was Director. He never kept any schedule. He was very smart, but very arrogant. We had a meeting set up for him at the State Department to see Secretary Rusk. About half-hour before the meeting time, I received a call from the Protocol Officer at Blair House saying that His Majesty was not going to come to the Department, but that he would be available to the Secretary sometime later, if the Secretary wished to call on him at Blair House. I rushed upstairs to brief the Secretary. In those days, the communications between the Secretary and the working levels was very good. I had found that out even earlier as a desk officer when even from that level I could get to talk to the Secretary. Certainly, as an officer director, I had easy access. Rusk took it very graciously and said: “What the young man wants, the young man gets! Let's go.” The King is shrewd. In comparison, for example, to the Shah, he had a far better political sense on how to keep his people reasonably under control and how to manipulate issues that might have popular support.

Q: What were our views of Algeria?

NEWSOM: We had some concern about possible Soviet penetration, but we were more interested in Algeria as a major piece of real estate on the Mediterranean in whose security we had a great interest. Particularly in the Kennedy administration, there was a mystique that we could relate better to Algeria than other Western countries could because we had been once a colony which had liberated itself. There was a long history of contacts between American diplomats — e.g. Bill Porter — and leaders of the pro-independence movements. We could not exaggerate he influence of one American on our policy towards North Africa. I refer to Irving Brown, the representative of the AFL-CIO in Paris. He became convinced, with a lot of justification, that if American labor organizations and government did not show greater interests in the emerging independence movements in Franco-phone Africa, they would be swept away by the left-oriented French labor organization. He felt that it was therefore very important that the United States established contacts with the emerging leadership, many of whom had been

part of the labor movement in their own countries. Irving Brown, in the early '60s, was very suspicious of the State Department and almost contemptuous of the organization. It took a while to build a relationship with Brown. I had the benefit of a cousin who was a professor of labor economics at Harvard and a close friend of Brown's. He suggested that I work to get to know Brown, which I did. Brown played a major role in letting the essentially anti-western independence leaders in Algeria and Tunisia know that they had alternatives in making alliances. He convinced that them that there were groups in the United States that supported them in their quests for independence. So Brown was a force that played an important role in our policy development.

Q: Let me turn to Algeria for a moment. US policy toward Algeria had been the subject of major bureaucratic battles between the Bureau of European Affairs, which supported the French, and the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs (there not being a Bureau for African Affairs at the time), which was more inclined to support independence movements. Were there any further evidence of this battle by the time you became Director for North Africa?

NEWSOM: Indeed there were. The battle had just finished when I arrived. But the scars of suspicion of what these Near East-Middle East-African types were doing were still evident. People like George Springsteen, then Assistant Secretary for Europe and formerly George Ball's special assistant, were very wary of us. I tangled with him later on the issue of Portugal and its colonies when I was Assistant Secretary for Africa. By the time I became Director, there wasn't much the Europeanists could do because De Gaulle had really pulled the plug on France's interests. There was an acute sensitivity during this period because we were just beginning our involvement in Vietnam which included cooperation with the French. So anything that appeared to be a slap in France's face was frowned upon.

Later, when I was dealing with the whole African continent, I went to Algeria stopping off first in Paris. There I called on Ambassador Watson who lambasted me for paying so much attention to Algeria. And that was ten years after Algerian independence!

Q: I assume from you comments that North African policy questions did not receive much attention from the Secretary or the Under Secretary.

NEWSOM: No, it did not. That was one of the delightful aspects of the job as Director. No one paid much attention to North Africa. There was very little interest anywhere in town in that area. “Soapy” Williams was so interested in black Africa that he did not spend much time on North Africa. I remember that Bill Porter returning in Algeria in 1965 after two years there as Ambassador. He had lived through many months of danger with murders on his door-steps, threats against him, etc. He had a meeting with “Soapy” to brief him. Afterwards, he came to my office, fuming, because he said the Governor had fallen asleep during the briefing.

As long as I kept people generally informed of activities in North Africa, they didn't bother me. It was a great job!

Q: We haven't mentioned Tunisia or Libya yet. Were there any problems there?

NEWSOM: We had a constant problem trying to satisfy their requests for assistance. Tunisia was a country with promise. Bourguiba was a good friend with whom we had excellent relations.

With Libya, on the other hand, we were beginning in the 1963-64 period to become concerned with its policy directions. The influence of Nasser was very strong. We had an Ambassador, Allan Lightner, who had never been in the Arab world before and who gave every indication of not understanding it. Hermann Eilts has ever forgiven me for having sent him to Libya on temporary duty as acting DCM in an effort to help Lightner acquire an better appreciation of the Arab world. We wanted him to stop haranguing the Libyan regime about the evils of Nasser, which at the time, was totally profitless. We were more interested in holding on to Wheelus Air Force base which was an anathema to Arab nationalists. Furthermore, oil drilling in Libya was beginning to show great potential and

American companies were showing increasing interest in developing those oil fields. So our relationships with Libya were becoming increasingly important.

I should mention the Sudan which was well engaged in its historical North-South split. That concerned us. Nimeiri came to power while I was the Director. We supported him because in his first days, he was a very positive influence in trying to heal the North-South breach. We tried to develop two major projects in the Sudan: one was for a dam and the other was the Khartoum-Port Sudan road. We ran into the same problems that still exist today. Sudan is a country with great potential, but badly structured to take advantage of foreign assistance. Assistance was a useful diplomatic tool for us in places like Ethiopia and Tunisia.

Q: Today is March 15, 1995 (after almost a four year interval) interview with Ambassador David Newsom.

Mr. Ambassador, I've been looking at the transcript of our previous session. Before we pick up chronologically let me ask about something you mentioned at that time. You said when you first came into the Foreign Service there was no introduction in the Foreign Service Institute basic course to Harold Nicholson or Satow, or anybody else who wrote on diplomacy. You only discovered the classic literature later when taught at the Georgetown School of Foreign Service. What would be the advantage of working and discussing the writings of people on diplomacy for young diplomats?

NEWSOM: I think two advantages. One, there is a great deal in Nicholson and other classic writings on diplomacy about the art of negotiation and the art of dealing with those from other governments that I think would quite properly be a part of a Foreign Service officer's education. Secondly, I found that, in dealing with European diplomats who were familiar with these works, I was uninformed about the classic literature of diplomacy. So I think such study is justified just from the standpoint of presenting American diplomats with an education parallel to that of their counterparts. Those that have majored in international

relations in their university careers (which I did not do) may have encountered these works, but I find even at the University of Virginia, where there is a tradition of international relations courses, that very few of them deal with the practice of diplomacy as defined by Satow and Nicholson and others. So I think these books should be part of the young Foreign Service officer's training either as a refresher or as an introduction.

Q: We left you before you were in North African affairs, and we'd reached the point where you were appointed as Ambassador to Libya where you served from '65 to '69. How did this appointment come about?

NEWSOM: I had completed four years in the Office of North African Affairs and was familiar with the issues involving Libya. It seemed a logical assignment.

Q: This I take it was not a political plum. This was one that was more or less going...we're talking about early in the Lyndon Johnson administration.

NEWSOM: No, I was very pleased to get the assignment. At that time it was a very interesting one for an American ambassador. We still had the Wheelus airfield there. It was a country where there was a growing American presence because of the discovery of oil. So it was a good post.

Q: When you went there did you have, sort of in your hip pocket, a list of things you wanted to accomplish, or problems you wanted to try to work on?

NEWSOM: As I recall there was some uncertainty at the time about where the Libyan government stood on the duration of the agreement on Wheelus airbase. That was one matter to be worked out. And secondly, I wanted to be sure that the embassy was in tune with the growing American presence and whatever problems that might involve the US officially as the result of that presence.

Q: We're talking about the oil.

NEWSOM: Oil, yes. Both oil and the base issues became very active in the first two years I was there. I don't recall the exact dates but a bitter dispute arose between the major oil companies and the so-called independent oil companies. The major companies, the so-called Seven Sisters, had interests throughout the Middle East and had come into Libya. But the Libyans, unlike other oil producing countries, had not given concessions only to the major companies, but had also distributed concessions to a number of companies that were new to the area. And when OPEC (The Organization of Producing and Exporting Countries) declared a new policy on how royalties would be treated in tax calculations, it was a move that was favorable to the majors, but not to the independents. There was a strong move by the major companies to force the Libyan government to require the independent companies to go along with this OPEC arrangement. It created a very bitter division within the American private sector community, not something that perhaps fell normally in the embassy's preview, but major American interests were involved. So I became involved in that. Ultimately a compromise between these two groups of companies was worked out in a session attended by their respective lawyers in my residence in Libya.

Q: By the way, you had Occidental as one of the leaders of the independents — Armand Hammer and company.

NEWSOM: That's right. But the Oasis group of Marathon and one or two other smaller companies was really more of a spearhead than Occidental. Armand Hammer acted pretty well independently in Libya, benefitting from his access to the King, and various other favors distributed in the Libyan political world.

Q: How did you find the Libyan petroleum expertise? Because at this time ARAMCO in Saudi Arabia was dominant but Arab countries were beginning to challenge the power of the companies. They were beginning to produce leaders who were knowledgeable in the field. But how about in Libya at that time?

NEWSOM: Ibrahim Moussa was minister of petroleum. He was supported by a pretty sophisticated oil ministry. As a matter of fact, the whole Libyan approach to the concession was, as I said before, a radical departure from the way the Gulf countries had handled it. Libya divided up the country into squares and determined that no company would have more than a certain proportion of the total territory. Squares were put out to bids which opened up the Libyan oil much more widely than had been the case of Saudi Arabia.

Q: Were you getting any instructions from Washington on how to handle these negotiations — to stay out of them, or to get into them?

NEWSOM: If I learned one thing in Libya, it was that the fewer questions you posed to Washington, the more chance you have of resolving problems. I had a general idea of the limits of my maneuver. I also felt that there were some unusual problems about which Washington would probably prefer not to be bothered. I was introduced in Libya to the whole complex of dilemmas in the US government's relationship with the private sector. The private sector, in general, doesn't want the US government meddling in its business. And at that time, unlike today, embassies were not encouraged to get into commercial promotion to any great extent. But on the question of the oil company problem, I don't recall they were getting any specific instructions. I worked on the basis that when major US interests were involved, it was quite appropriate for the ambassador to offer good offices, and neutral meeting places for the working out of private sector problems. But the decisions would have to be theirs. Had I been questioned about my role, I think I could have defended it on the basis of the threat to the broader image of the United States in Libya, and in the Middle East, of an open, unresolved battle between two groups of American companies.

The only time I got rapped on the knuckles was when Libya was in the market for new aircraft, and the only salesman on the block at that point was from Boeing. Boeing was in heavy competition with British Aircraft, which was getting strong support from the British embassy. I met with the Boeing representative and told him that his agent had the wrong

political connections. He was not very receptive at first, but as he did more investigating he found out that I was right. And then I did make some quiet representations of behalf of Boeing — the only US company with an active proposal. Boeing then wrote a letter to the Department, and also, I guess, to the Department of Commerce, expressing appreciation for the help of the American ambassador. That resulted in a telegram saying that it was inappropriate to be representing one company without encouraging other American companies to come in. But I survived that.

Q: It was an exciting period to be there. What were some of the other developments that you had to deal with?

NEWSOM: When I got there the government was agitating for, or at least there were some in Libya that were agitating for the withdrawal of Wheelus airbase. It was seen as a vestige of a past period. As Libyan oil brought more and more revenue, the aid from the United States was less and less relevant and therefore Wheelus, which was associated with aid as a quid pro quo, was less and less popular. So I had to deal with that. I negotiated an agreement with the King which accepted the “principle of withdrawal,” but without setting any date. At first Washington didn't like this approach very much, but, ultimately, I think they understood what I had done and why. The agreement finessed the issue of ultimate withdrawal and reduced the pressure for immediate action.

The most difficult period was during the 1967 war...

Q: We're talking about the six day war in June between Israel, Egypt and Syria.

NEWSOM: Right. Libya was not an active participant in the war but Libya is a country that has very fierce feelings about its relationship with the rest of the Arab world. Gamal Abdel Nasser, the president of Egypt, was very popular in Libya. There were a lot of Libyans who felt Libya should have joined in the war in support of Egypt. There were actually some Libyans who tried to cross the border into Egypt to fight, and, as I recall, the King stopped them. But when the war broke out, you may recall, that was the so-called “big lie,”

perpetrated by Nasser and others, that the US had flown air cover for the Israelis when they bombed Cairo. This was widely accepted in Libya. So not being quite sure of the security of the American community, we evacuated all of the American dependents and non-essential personnel, and shut down operations at Wheelus. And for about two or three months after the war, Libya was in a traumatic state, and we had nothing but the most basic contacts with Libyan officials and very little contact with the rest of Libyan society.

I will tell a story to illustrate the feeling at the time. The governor of the Bank of Libya was an Italian-trained economist whom I had come to know. About two months or so after the war I passed him on the street, greeted him and that I'd like to come and visit him. He said, “No, I'll come to you,” and he fixed the time. He came by and we sat in the garden. I'll always remember his saying to me, “I know that this is a difficult time for you Americans, and I'm fairly well convinced that the big lie is wrong.” “But,” he said, “you have to understand that it's difficult for me and for most Libyans to accept the fact that two million people, whom we always considered second class citizens, could whip 80 million Arabs. So in my head, I know that you didn't help the Israelis, but in my heart that's the only explanation that gives me satisfaction.” Well, there we are, that's the Middle East.

As another illustration, a newspaper publisher told me later that the power of Nasser's message was such in Libya that when he took a ticker item out to his composing room to be set in type saying that Nasser had accepted a cease-fire, and, in effect, surrendered, his typesetters refused to set it in type. He had to get a tape of Nasser's actually making that statement before they would put into type.

We did get Wheelus back in operation. That was also an adventure. The Air Force in Washington didn't quite understand why we were so leery about Air Force operations. One had to appreciate that Wheelus was right in the center of a growing suburban area of Tripoli so that the aircraft taking off were a major annoyance to the population that lived around the base, and there was no way to disguise their operations. So after a couple of months I suggested that the head of the 16th Air Force, a major general, come down

and we work together to get the base back into operation. We took two planes off one day to see if there was any reaction, and four planes the next day, and we gradually got it back into operation. The general told me later that he'd had a query from Air Force Headquarters about why he was letting the ambassador run Air Force operations. He said he waited until the base was back in normal operations, and then sent in a brief message saying, “I didn't want to argue with success.”

Q: I might add, and correct me if I'm wrong, but Wheelus was being used for rotating our combat aircraft which are rather noisy.

NEWSOM: It was a training base for aircraft (primarily F-4s at that time) based in Europe. They would come down and take off from Wheelus, and fly down the coast to a bombing range where they did their principal training.

Q: To continue with Wheelus, was Wheelus in operation the whole time you were there?

NEWSOM: Yes.

Q: The Brits, they had had troops there, hadn't they, at one point?

NEWSOM: The British had a base at Al Adam, which was over in eastern Libya near Tobruk. They had had troops in Tripoli at one time, but they were gone by the time I was there. They still had troops in Cyrenaica, in the eastern part of the country. And we were grateful that they did have because when the '67 war came the most threatening demonstrations were in Benghazi. Our consulate staff was trapped in the vault by an angry mob and was rescued by British troops.

Q: How did you find dealing with King Idriss. What was your evaluation at that time with him and his government?

NEWSOM: King Idriss was a man who clearly did not want to be King, and did not like Libya. Born in Algeria, he'd lived 40 years of his life in Cairo. His personal entourage

consisted of Palestinians and Italians. As far as I could observe, he had no Libyans in his immediate service. He would really only take an interest in governing the country when there was a crisis and he was forced to make some decisions. I guess he fairly shrewdly manipulated the political elite of the time to put together governments that had some possibility of effective support, but he was not popular. The revolution in '69, I think, came about as much because of a vacuum of power as it was an excess of power.The King had been out of the country, in Turkey, for some time before the revolution.

Q: How did you find the government — the foreign ministry and all — that you had to deal with?

NEWSOM: There were some excellent people among the Libyan ministers, and there were some that were difficult. There was an undercurrent of xenophobia in Libya, an undercurrent of what we would today call Islamic, maybe not militancy, but at least a strong Islamic strain. One has to remember that countries have been fighting their wars across Libyan territory since the days of the Roman Empire and through World War II. So there's a long history of hatred of foreigners who have crossed and criss-crossed Libyan territory. Qadhafi came to power after I left, but some of his ideas that seem somewhat strange to the outsider are not strange to someone who understood these kinds of tendencies in the Libyan society.

So when you were dealing with the Libyan government, you needed to be conscious of these sensitivities, and to some extent of the vulnerabilities of those who chose to work in the King's government because they encountered criticism, if not outright hostility, on the part of some of their fellow countrymen. There was one Libyan Prime Minister there much of the time that I was there, by the name Hussein Mazziq, who was the most impenetrable of the officials I dealt with. He had a technique I had never encountered then or since. If you asked him a question he didn't want to answer, he just sat there, mute, and left you to pick up the conversation.

Q: How did you find the embassy staff.

NEWSOM: I had a good staff. It was not a large staff. With one exception, they worked well during the crisis period of '67. We had a couple of excellent Arabists. I look back on the staff very favorably, including the Agency personnel with whom I worked closely.

Q: We're talking about the CIA.

NEWSOM: Including the CIA, yes.

We had a small office up in Baida, which was the alternate capital, a small town up in the hills of Cyrenaica, where the King liked to spend more time than in Tripoli. During the '67 war, there was an officer, who shall remain nameless, who sent word that he felt uncomfortable in the current atmosphere, and announced that he was closing the office and leaving for Benghazi. So in the middle of the crisis I had to fly up in an air force jet, landing in a very small airfield, to put another officer up there because Baida was a critical post at that point. But, other than that incident, the staff was very good.

Q: Did you find the CIA, or the military attach#s were giving you any forebodings of the Qadhafi coup. Or were you waiting for a shoe to drop?

NEWSOM: The agency had reports of a group that was forming, called the Black Boots, probably a group that was centered around an officer by the name of Abdul Aziz Shalhi. But that group, if they had any intention of trying to seize power, was preempted by the Qadhafi group on which we had no information.

Q: Did the situation in Algeria spill over into Libya?

NEWSOM: No, Algeria got its independence in '62. There were no events there as I remember that had an impact on Libya.

One other problem that I should mention in connection with Libya was the problem of corruption. Either the existence of corruption, or the belief in corruption, has been a factor in most of the Middle Eastern revolutions that I have observed. One of the almost Shakespearean parts of the Libyan scene was the position held by a family named Shalhi. Those of the family who were there when I was there were children to Ibrahim Shalhi. Ibrahim Shalhi had been assigned as a companion to Idriss when Idriss was nine and Shalhi was eleven. Idriss was the successor to the leadership of a movement called the Senousi movement, a religious movement that extended throughout North Africa. These two men grew up together. Ibrahim Shalhi was assassinated very shortly after Libyan independence. The king, who had no living issue of his own, adopted the Shalhi family. There were two members of that family to whom the King gave virtual carte blanche to profiteer from the awarding of the oil concessions. I grew used to complaints from Libyan ministers that their decisions were sometimes overridden by the influence of the Shalhi family. How much a contributing factor this was to the undermining of the King, I don't know, but it certainly was a factor.

Q: On the technicalities of how diplomacy is done. You see a bad corruption problem. How does one report this? Just a report may leak in the US, setting off all sorts of reactions that are detrimental to other policies. How do you as ambassador see this problem? How do you deal with it?

NEWSOM: Well, as I remember, we reported the reports of corruption. We couldn't name names, particularly names of Americans who might have been involved because we didn't have the evidence, and embassies have no statutory responsibility, even under the Corrupt Practices Act, to investigate allegations of corruption. But because rumors of corruption were a political fact, this was quite legitimate to report. I took it upon myself on a couple of occasions in talking to the King, to raise questions about the reports of the activities of the Shalhi family. But it was very clear that this was a subject that the old

king did not want to discuss. A kind of mask would come over his face and that was it. Indirectly, the Libyan experience led to the enactment of the Corrupt Practices Act.

Q: You're talking about USCPA?

NEWSOM: Yes, the US Corrupt Practices Act. After I returned from Libya and was appointed assistant secretary for African affairs, I was called up to a congressional hearing on charges laid against the Occidental Petroleum Company by a disgruntled accountant. A staff member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee had encountered this man and gained from him a lot of details about payoffs. I remember being asked by Senators at the time, “Did you know about this?” I remember telling them I had heard rumors, but this was not a matter in which the US government had any role or authority. This was a matter between the US companies and the Libyans, and, therefore, I had no basis for inquiring into this. A couple of the Senators were quite taken aback by that, and I think this led to an enactment of legislation.

Q: While you were there, as you say, Nasser was a major figure in Libya. And here you have this King — was it the feeling that Nasser or his agents were trying to overthrow the King? How were things going?

NEWSOM: There was no doubt about Nasser's popularity as I mentioned in the context of the '67 war. There may have been Egyptian activities. I don't recall any direct attacks by Nasser on Libya although I'm sure there were undercurrents that emanated from Egypt against Wheelus and against the American presence. But the Libyan elite with whom I was dealing mostly were at least, even after '67, somewhat contemptuous of Nasser, and loved to tell Nasser jokes that they'd picked up in Cairo. There was no doubt but what, under the surface, Nasser's brand of Arab nationalism was making great headway. I might add that after the King was overthrown, Nasser, very shrewdly, gave Idriss asylum in Cairo and provided him with one of Farouk's old palaces. I think Nasser, not being quite sure about Qadhafi, felt that he would have a card to play.

Q: When did you leave Libya?

NEWSOM: July of 1969.

Q: Just before the coup.

NEWSOM: Yes.

Q: When you left Libya how did you feel about whither Libya?

NEWSOM: I wrote an airgram after going around and meeting with a number of prominent Libyans and said basically, I can't predict how things are going to turn out in this country, but there is definitely a malaise that could lead to major political developments. We shouldn't be surprised if such developments take place — something along that line.

Q: You came back basically to return to where you had been but one step up to become Assistant Secretary for African Affairs. From 1969 to '73. How did you feel about going back to that bureau?

NEWSOM: I thought it was a good job and I was very pleased to be chosen. It was one of the best jobs I ever had, in part because nobody in the Nixon administration was terribly interested in Africa and I had a considerable amount of leeway. I got back and was plunged right into two major issues. One was the drafting of a new policy paper on Southern Africa, a famous National Security decision memorandum, NSSM 39. There was a tug of war between the African Bureau and the National Security Council staff over a paper that many in the Department felt tilted too much to a favorable attitude towards South Africa. I incurred the wrath of the NSC staff because I took the whole thing home one weekend and rewrote it to what I considered a more balanced approach. It didn't go through quite that way but it was better than when we started.

The other major problem was the Nigerian civil war over Biafra.

Q: I wonder if we can go back to the South African problem. We're really talking about the beginning of putting South Africa into a certain amount of isolation throughout the world because of its apartheid policy.

NEWSOM: No, we're talking about the reversal of that, or attempts to reverse it. The Kennedy administration came in with a strong interest in Africa at the same time that the Black Caucus began to develop and African-American organizations began to take an interest in the apartheid situation. A major thrust toward greater isolation of South Africa, establishing an arms embargo, stopping naval visits, and curtailing export credits began under Kennedy. When the Nixon administration came in with its more conservative supporters, there was an effort to reverse that, but it was an effort that was not totally successful. There was some lifting of limits on dual purpose items for the South African military, such as executive jet aircraft. I guess some liberalization of export credits took place, but the Nixon administration discovered that there were limitations they hadn't fully realized. At one point, for example, they wanted to send an aircraft carrier into Simonstown, the South African naval base, for refueling. When we pointed out to them that the black and white sailors were going to be separated as they got off the ship, that gave them pause. They figured in the Nixon administration that they'd gotten only 8% of the black vote, and they didn't have to pay too much attention to black attitudes, but there were a lot of white American attitudes that were opposed to apartheid that they had to take into consideration.

Q: Did Henry Kissinger play much of a role that early on the African thing, or not?

NEWSOM: No, Henry Kissinger didn't really discover Africa until after I left, and he discovered there were Cubans in Angola.

Q: So you were blessed.

NEWSOM: I had a good working relationship with him. He was supportive when it helped, but he wasn't terribly interested.

Q: Did he ever sit you down and say, tell me about Africa?

NEWSOM: The only occasion I remember when we had a discussion — and I'm sure there were more than this, but I remember this one particularly — someone in the Defense Department had the thought that the United States should try to promote an alliance between Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia, and they had reached Henry Kissinger on this. I had to go and explain to Henry Kissinger the history of the antagonism of Christian Ethiopia for Muslim Saudi Arabia and I didn't think that this was something that we should be promoting. He accepted that.

Q; To put it in bureaucratic terms, what did the AF bureau have, and actually what didn't it have in the African continent?

NEWSOM: You mean responsibilities?

Q: Yes, which countries?

NEWSOM: We had all of Africa except Egypt. After I left they moved North Africa into NEA.

Q: Moving to North Africa, the coup happened almost after you left. You were holding up the country and then Qadhafi came in.

NEWSOM: September 1, yes.

Q: How did we initially see the Qadhafi movement?

NEWSOM: I left Libya at the end of June. It was a couple of weeks after the coup before we really had some understanding of its nature. Qadhafi initially didn't appear as the

leader. There were some moderate Libyans that we had known. One was a lawyer for one of the oil companies. So initially we thought that maybe this was something we could work with. But then Qadhafi gradually emerged as leader. Joe Palmer, who had been my predecessor as the Assistant Secretary for Africa, went out as ambassador. We had at least assumed that we could establish a normal relationship. But then gradually it became clear that Khady was in charge with his xenophobic view of the world and his demands that Wheelus leave. Relationships became more and more strained. There were increasing demands. Our information office was sacked, as I remember, and, after I left for a new assignment in the mid "70s, we ultimately, I guess, suspended all relationships.

I got back into the picture just after I came in as Under Secretary in '78 when Mansour Kikhya, the Libyan diplomat who recently disappeared while in Cairo, whom I had known, before came to me to suggest that possibly relations could be improved. Kikhya, at that time, was Libya's UN representative. This was right at the time that Billy Carter, Jimmy Carter's brother, had gotten into some prominence by working on some contract in Libya. Carter had, contrary to our advice, received the head of the Libyan People's Bureau in Washington, the equivalent of their embassy. He hoped to try to straighten out his brother's problems through the People's Bureau channel. But on that basis we felt that senior American officials should also see Qadhafi. So I was sent out to Libya some time in mid '78. But just before I went out Senator Jacob Javits introduced a measure in the Senate banning all commercial aircraft sales to Libya. When I got there the doors closed unless I could get that ban lifted, which wasn't possible. So that was my last immersion in Libyan problems.

Q: Did Secretary of State Rogers have much interest in African affairs?

NEWSOM: Yes, he did. He was very supportive of me. He supported the bureau when we insisted that our consulate in Salisbury, Rhodesia, be closed after Ian Smith had made his unilateral declaration of independence. He was the first Secretary of State to tour Africa. I went with him on that journey. But he had his own problems with the White House.

Q: Given the fact that Henry Kissinger had the ear of Nixon, as Assistant Secretary did you feel that Rogers did not have the clout that a normal Secretary of State had.

NEWSOM: You couldn't escape an awareness of that. In spite of what I sensed then and have known since to have been his intense frustrations with his old friend Nixon, and with Kissinger, Rogers himself, who is a very honorable citizen, never gave a hint to any of us of those frustrations. Sometimes you could sense it. We had a weekly lunch with the Secretary which was great. But I remember, for example, once standing by his desk when he wanted to talk to the President about something. He picked up the phone to call the President and I guess he got Bob Haldeman, and Haldeman must have told Rogers that the President was not available or something. He slammed the phone down. You could sense his frustration.

Q: Sticking to the Northern African thing first. How about the problem of the Polisario movement between Morocco and Algeria at this particular time. Was this a problem for you?

NEWSOM: It was just in its beginning stages, and I would really have to go back and look at the chronology. One problem in that region was the problem of managing the admission of Mauritania to the UN, something that had been opposed by the Moroccans. A compromise was ultimately worked out to admit both Mauritania and Mongolia to satisfy both sides of the Cold War divide. The Polisario problem was complicated for us because Mauritania supported the Polisario but we needed to maintain good relations with Morocco.

Q: Turning now to Biafra. When you arrived there was the civil war going in Nigeria at that time?

NEWSOM: The civil war had been going on, I guess, for about a year. The big issue was whether the United States would support the movement of relief supplies into Biafra

without the consent of the military government in Lagos. The Biafran issue became an American domestic political issue. Peace Corps volunteers who had served in eastern Nigeria organized, primarily in Massachusetts, a group that was pro-Biafran. They were joined by a network of Catholic fathers who worked in Biafra. One of these fathers ran a communications network for Ojukwu, the Biafran leader. The Both the Peace Corps volunteers and the Holy Ghost fathers reached Senator Edward Kennedy, who was then the head of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Their efforts were combined with a very effective lobby run out of Geneva by an outfit called Mark Press. In addition, a group of very effective Ibos who had been working in American universities mounted a newspaper advertising campaign, for example, with a picture of a child with a bloated belly resulting from kwashiorkor, a malnutrition disease. Subsequently we learned that it wasn't a picture of a Biafran child at all.

I came into the foreign service from the San Francisco area. When I returned to Washington from Libya to take up my assignment as assistant secretary for Africa, someone sent me a full page ad in the San Francisco Examiner addressed to David Newsom, new Assistant Secretary of African Affairs, with the picture of the kwashiorkor child. The ad read: “If you want to save this child write to Assistant Secretary David Newsom.” So I arrived in the Department with a great stack of mostly hate mail.

Senator Kennedy held a series of hearings on trying to get aid into Biafra. The issue was whether aid could go in on night flights unmonitored by the Nigerians. The Nigerians were afraid, probably with some justification, that they would be carrying arms as well as food. There was also pressure for the US to recognize Biafra as an independent country. Nixon, himself, I think, toyed with that idea at one time. Biafra, as with the case of the earlier separatism of Katanga in Congo, (Zaire), was seen by many as a blow against the development of major black African countries. So, to the black community in the United States, Biafra became a symbol of those who were trying to break up the largest black nation in the world. The African bureau was caught between these attitudes. The attitude in the White House was one really against the federal military government in Lagos. The

attitude in the black community and the liberal white community was one that supported Lagos. So. until the war ended, we were caught in this constant and sometimes highly emotional battle. The NSC had two people, Roger Morris and Dick Kennedy, who were strong supporters of aid to Biafra. And at one time they were so unhappy with some of the reporting of the embassy in Lagos that they went out themselves to try and put the embassy straight on what they considered to be American policy. So it was a major bureaucratic and diplomatic...

Q: It's one of those things that's completely forgotten today. But you had really true believers. There was somebody in the Senate, on the Senate staff, I can't think of his name offhand but who was almost rabid on the subject. Then you had the Beatles doing concerts for Biafra. You had the glitter involved with Biafra. I take it you didn't feel much support, did you, trying to hold this policy?

NEWSOM: No, what one had to do was to emphasize the need for coordination of relief support efforts, to try to find out what was really happening in Biafra, and to hold the line against any recognition of Biafra. The end of the war revealed that exact conditions inside Biafra had been considerably exaggerated.

Q: I did an interview with somebody else during the Dean Rusk time who was talking about a call from Dean Rusk; I think he was either one of your predecessors or one step down was saying, well, I've got to hand it to you with this Nigerian thing, because he was getting delegations from the Jewish community in the United States, the black community, the Protestants, the Catholics all of them over something that was very peripheral to our national interests.

NEWSOM: But it did attract attention.

Q: I remember there was talk about, oh, it's going to be a tremendous blood bath if the Biafra cause goes down, which it did, and there wasn't a blood bath. What were you

getting from the field? How did you feel the field was supporting you, and you supporting the field.?

NEWSOM: The embassy in Lagos was primarily emphasizing the importance to the United States of maintaining a good relationship with Nigeria. It was trying to report what it knew about the situation in Biafra. One element in it was the big debate over a report, the so-called Weston report, on nutrition in Biafra that was made by the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta about late '69 or early '70. As I remember, it put things in a somewhat less alarmist projection than some of the propaganda on behalf of Biafra. But then the real crunch came after the war ended in January of 1970-71. I was sent out to Lagos to urge General Gowon, the Nigerian leader, to accept an international commission to oversee the post-war treatment of Biafra. My mission was not helped by the fact that the morning I was to see General Gowon, I was having breakfast with my British counterpart, Maurice Foley, and we were listening to the BBC. The BBC announced that representatives of the United States and Britain “will today see General Gowon and press him to accept an international commission to oversee the reincorporation of Biafra.” The last thing either one of us needed at that time was a signal to Gowon on what we were going to raise. When I went to see Gowon, an impressive man, I presented my requests to him. He turned around in his chair and he waved at a bookcase behind his desk where there was a full set of Bruce Catton's history of the American civil war. He said, “I have read about your war, and I can tell you, and you can tell Washington, that our treatment of Biafra will be much more humane than the North's treatment of the South.” And, actually, it was. This was the first time that I had met General Obasanjo, who later became president of Nigeria, and then was subsequently arrested by the present Nigerian government. He was a brigadier in the Nigerian army, assigned to work on the rehabilitation of the eastern provinces, together with a man named Mohammed who was the head of the Nigerian Red Cross. They really did a remarkable job of reincorporating peacefully eastern Nigeria into the rest of the country.

About a year and a half later, John Reinhardt, who was the then ambassador to Nigeria, and I, toured eastern Nigeria. This was only a year and a half or so after the war, and we were both struck by how much normality had returned, and how many of the Ibos had gone back. They had the attitude, well, we tried and we lost, but life has to go on. So it was not the blood bath that people...

Q: Moving down to Zaire. You were having the same type of thing, these divisive forces within this country. Again, during the period you were there, how did we view Zaire?

NEWSOM: We were still viewing Zaire as a success growing out of the UN-US effort in what was then the Congo in the ''60s. So we were supporting Mobutu. We were troubled by a lot of the indications of megalomania and corruption that were coming out of Zaire. But there was no inclination to risk any strong pressures on Mobutu that might have resulted in a breakup of Zaire. Mobutu was occasionally toying with anti-American rhetoric, so we occasionally had to remind him of where his butter was spread. It was not a major issue during...

Q: How about going down to what was then Southern Rhodesia, the UDI, the Unilateral Declaration of Independence? That was pretty active during the whole time you were there.

NEWSOM: I had to parry the efforts of the Rhodesian Information Service. Every time I went out to make a speech, there were always two or three people who had been supplied with yellow pages by the Rhodesian information service with a number of questions to put to me, such as “Weren't we turning our backs on people who, just like the American colonialists, had revolted against British rule?” There was a lot of conservative sentiment in the congress on behalf of Rhodesia, and I had to face the so-called Byrd amendment.

Q: This was Senator Byrd.

NEWSOM: Not the West Virginia Byrd, but the Virginia Byrd, Harry Byrd. We were supporting the UN sanctions against Rhodesia. There was a lot of opposition, and Senator Byrd and friends of Rhodesia came up with this idea that because of the sanctions we were now dependent upon the Soviet Union for vital materials, particularly chrome. Therefore, there should be a unilateral exception for the United States to purchase chrome from Rhodesia. The Byrd amendment was ultimately passed. Throughout this period, on things like the Byrd amendment, the State Department and really the African bureau, had to fight the congressional battle by itself. There was no interest in the White House in opposing the conservative views on...

Q: And the conservative views would you say there was a tinge of racism there?

NEWSOM: There certainly was that, yes. A feeling of white kinship to put it in a more positive light.

Q: Ethnic bonding.

NEWSOM: Yes. And there was also the idea of communist penetration into Southern Africa. There was a map that I used to get from some of the pro-Rhodesian people with great red arrows coming down into the heartland and threatening the Cape route for oil, threatening vital minerals.

Q: Were there any developments on the Rhodesian thing as far as the United States was concerned during the time you were there?

NEWSOM: The principal issue after the declaration of UDI was whether we would keep open our consulate in Salisbury. The White House wished to do so. In the Department we believed that this would signal a recognition of the Smith regime. Strongly supported by Secretary Rogers, we were able to close the consulate. The US role in supporting the Lancaster House conference came later.

Q: That was the one that more or less settled the...

NEWSOM: There were continual efforts to try and find a solution, but nothing gelled during my time in the African bureau.

Q: How did we feel at that time, '69-'73 period about Soviet penetration of Africa?

NEWSOM: I think there was beginning to emerge in the United States a feeling that the Soviets were having their problems in Africa. That was apart from those who tried to picture the Southern African struggle as essentially a struggle between the West and both Soviet and Chinese communism. I don't think that we felt the threat was too great but the only way you could get aid from Congress for some parts of Africa was to stress the Soviet threat. So you'll find a constant repetition of references to it in documents and statements presented to the Congress.

Q: What was the feeling about the aid program, from your point of view, about how it was going, advantages, and what it was doing in Africa.

NEWSOM: I came into office just after the Senate had passed a law limiting bilateral aid programs to ten countries in Africa. So my task was to go around Africa with a ladle and a bucket of water to pour cold water on expectations that had been raised by the rhetoric and the actions of the ''60s. For much of the African continent we were left with no aid instruments other than a $50,000 self-help fund. There was a lot of disillusionment in Congress about some of the major aid programs that we had had, including long-term commitments to Nigeria and Ghana and Kenya that had been slow in implementation. So we had an up-hill battle to secure aid for African countries unless we could demonstrate that there was a collateral interest such as the communication station we had in Ethiopia, Cagnew station, and obligations to strategically placed countries like Kenya and Zaire. We did manage to continue aid programs to ten countries, but these were not terribly popular programs with a lot of people on the Hill.

Q: Were the ten countries mandated by Congress?

NEWSOM: Senator William Fulbright introduced legislation limiting bilateral aid to ten countries, but the countries were not specified.

Q: There must have been a great deal of fighting within the AF bureau and AID over who gets the aid?

NEWSOM: Yes, I'm sure there was. I don't remember details of the battle.

Q: What was your impression of the benefits of the Peace Corps?

NEWSOM: I was very high on the Peace Corps, particularly after we had to cut back on regular aid programs. The Peace Corps represented our only presence in many countries. The Peace Corps was effective when there were individual volunteers out in rural areas. The Peace Corps was a disaster when there was a group congregated in capitals. When Secretary Rogers made his trip in 1970 through Africa, the two problems we had with the Peace Corps were in Tunis and Addis Ababa where Peace Corps volunteers were, in effect, demonstrating against American policy in Vietnam, and were very hostile to the Secretary. This congregation of young Americans out of the "60s generation in an African capital feeding each other's Vietnam frenzies was an unhealthy mix.

Q: So we're now in Indonesia from 1974 to '77. How did that appointment come about? You'd been sort of an African hand, and all of a sudden Indonesia.

NEWSOM: Well, I was flying across the Atlantic with HenrKissinger who had just become Secretary of State, and was making his first trip abroad as Secretary to North Africa. He asked me whether I wanted to stay on as Assistant Secretary or go somewhere overseas. And I said I thought four years was enough as Assistant Secretary, and I would be interested in an overseas post. And he said, what about Indonesia? I said that sounded very interesting, so Indonesia it was.

Q: Before you went out to Indonesia, you had been immersed in African affairs. How did you bring yourself up to snuff?

NEWSOM: In a sense sub-Saharan Africa was a diversion from the areas that I had been active in before. I had been active largely in Muslim countries, Pakistan, Iraq, Libya, desk officer for the Arabian Peninsula, and I thought it would be interesting to go to the other extremity of the Muslim world, the largest Muslim country. I tried to learn as much as I could about Indonesia. I'd been there as a young man when it was still the Dutch East Indies so I was not entirely unfamiliar with it.

Q: This is part of your pre-World War II trip that you made.

NEWSOM: Yes. What I encountered was a feeling on the part of the East Asian hands — skeptical that anyone who had not been immersed in East Asia could understand Indonesia? I have had a general philosophy that, although certainly countries are very different, there are certain approaches you can take to understanding the power structure in a country, understanding where decisions are made, and by whom. This an essential element of a diplomat's task, and I found some very interesting material about the power structure in Indonesia, particularly after the 1965 abortive coup in Indonesia. It was in many ways one of the most interesting assignments that I had.

Q: When you went out there in 1974 I would imagine that you probably had a little check list, these are things I want to do, or problems to resolve. What were these?

NEWSOM: The United States had a very good relationship with Indonesia. We had a substantial aid program, both economic and military. Another thing that was not unfamiliar to me was that Indonesia was an oil producing country and I had been associated with several oil producing countries. I wanted obviously to maintain the momentum of the relationship and to understand as much of the politics as I could. As I prepared for the position, in Washington pressures grew on the human rights question. Legislation

passed in the Congress about the time I went out to Indonesia required that human rights considerations be taken into account in aid programs. It was clear that something had to be done about the perceptions of the human rights situation in Indonesia. That became one of my principal tasks. When I went out there, there were still about 30,000 people held in detention following the abortive coup in 1965, many of them on an island called Buru. They were charged with being members of communist organizations. The Suharto regime, then and now in power, blamed the 1965 events on the communists, particularly the Chinese communists. These people had never been formally charged with anything, and Amnesty International and others had picked up their cause. In 1975, there was a threat of some very specific legislation in the Congress that would have cut off military assistance to Indonesia if something weren't done about these detainee. I had developed a good relationship with a man who was then the head of Army intelligence, General Benny Murdani, and I went to him for advice. I pointed out that there was a move in the Congress to enact country-specific legislation directed at Indonesia which would obviously create problems. Should I go to President Suharto and explain this, and explain why, I asked. General Murdani said, “No, don't do that. He will only see that as a threat. Let me think about it.” Murdani came back in about a week and suggested that he and another man, Ali Murtopo, who was then head of the Army-backed political party, visit Washington to talk with the members of Congress about the situation in Indonesia. If they found that the situation was as I described it, they could then tell President Suharto and he would not see it as a threat coming from me. And this is what they did. The President made the decision to release these people. The first effort at release was not a great success because they invited the diplomats of the countries that had been pressing them on the issue to a ceremony in an army barracks in Sumatra. They brought in about 300 detainee, off-loaded them from army trucks, had them come in and swear an oath of allegiance to the nation's philosophy, and then put them back on trucks and drove them away. So I went to Benny Murdani and said, “You know, this isn't going to work. You've got to release them, let them mingle with their family, with the press, with the diplomats.” Well, they got

the picture and over the time I was there all but about 180 detainees who were considered to be the ring leaders of the communist effort were released.

Q: Let's talk a little about the human rights thing because this was something new on the horizon. You had Henry Kissinger who didn't disguise his disdain for this departure from power politics...I don't want to put it in a pejorative term, but this was where his interests lay and he felt this was a sideshow. In the first place, when you say Congress, it usually means there are a couple of people in Congress who are willing to make a fuss about this, and where did this come from?

NEWSOM: It came from Donald Fraser, a Congressman from Minnesota, who was the chairman of a subcommittee on international organizations with the House Foreign Affairs Committee. He and a small staff, unhappy with Kissinger's attitude, unhappy with what they saw as the US identification with a lot of military regimes in Latin America, began introducing legislation. I think, all in all, there were eleven different pieces of legislation that tied human rights to a variety of US government actions. This is important because everybody thinks that human rights started with Jimmy Carter's administration, and it didn't. Jimmy Carter brought some of the staff people that had worked with Donald Fraser into the State Department Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs, and much of the momentum was maintained. But the real impetus was in the Congress.

Q: When you went out there this was something new. I know even a little later I was in South Korea when human rights came up and we always said, it's all very nice, but we've got another problem, and that is North Korea is only 30 miles away. When this first came up you were really at the leading edge in a country where it was really important. How did you find that the State Department and the Foreign Service responded to this legislation at the very beginning?

NEWSOM: As I recall, this was now in the Ford administration and Kissinger was Secretary of State, I think there was an effort to head it off but then that didn't work. So

they had to adapt to it. I don't recall ever having received a formal instruction on this. In most of my career I acted on what I felt needed to be done and minimized the need to send me instructions. This was obviously something that needed to be done, and I had a lot of help. The Dutch ambassador was also getting pressures from the Netherlands. The Papal Nuncio was very important. The British ambassador, and to some extent, the Australian, worked with us and together we concluded that the possibility was there of making some progress.

Q: Within the embassy human rights all of a sudden became a subject. Did you find you had the problem that often would happen with an embassy. Say junior political officers who would take this cause on for their own, you had almost to control them. At least this is my experience in other places. Because they saw everything as youth will, in one color, one focus. Obviously we had a lot of other things going in Indonesia rather than just human rights. Was this a problem within the embassy?

NEWSOM: No, I don't think so because I didn't have to be prodded into it by anybody. I was taking the lead on it because I felt it was something that needed to be done.

I did something in Indonesia which was very interesting, speaking of the younger officers. I always found it important, but at the same time difficult as ambassador, to get the views of younger officers who often had different contacts, different perspectives. If you called in all the junior officers and asked them what they thought, you could sometimes get a dialogue going, but sometimes not. So I had a series of seminars during which I asked junior officers on a panel of four to present an issue as they saw it in Indonesia. I tried to get all of the agency heads to realize this was an academic exercise just within the embassy and I wanted these officers to speak their minds, tell me how they saw things. That worked very well with every agency but USIA. USIA officers all felt they had to spout the official line. One young Military Assistance Group officer got into difficulty with his chief because he was very candid, and I think quite accurate, about some of the problems with the Military Assistance program. I found that exercise useful.

Q: How did this work? Did you sit to one side while they conducted it, or were you a participant?

NEWSOM: No, I was part of the audience. I think we had three or four of them. The younger officers thought it was great — those that had the freedom to speak out.

Q: I was wondering, within the embassy...Indonesia is one of those countries that officers, particularly the younger officers, seem to love because the language is manageable. Indonesians are an interesting people, it's an interesting culture and it's a big country. Did you find this gave you more contacts, and more information flowing in than you might have gotten in some other places?

NEWSOM: Yes. Indonesia represented a great change from the Middle East and to some extent Africa where I had spent much of my time. The Indonesians did not lay all their problems at our door. The Indonesians, somewhat like the Chinese, have a very strong sense of their own identity. You can talk to them about sensitive subjects without having them erupt in rhetoric of one kind and another. They are interesting and generally pleasant people to deal with. They, like many people in the Asian world, often deal indirectly and you have to learn that. You have to build contacts so that when you go in to solve a problem you can find out what the problem is that you're trying to solve.

One example. We had a large American community there, about three or four thousand working in oil fields. Indonesia was just beginning the oil boom phase, and there were a lot of people in collateral businesses. We had a very good international school. It had been created on the basis of the foreign technicians that were working there at the time, so it had the curious board of sponsorship of four embassies, the American, Australians, Canadian and Yugoslav embassies. It was a school for both diplomatic and non-diplomatic children. One day I got wind of the fact that the Indonesian government was about to issue a decree that would forbid non-diplomatic children from attending this school. Non-diplomatic children were the bulk of the students. It would have meant a serious change

in the school. I tried to find out why this issue, this decree, was being issued. I had no success in approaching the matter frontally. One night at a dinner I saw a retired foreign minister, a man who had been ambassador in Washington whom I knew well, and I explained the situation and told him I was puzzled: “If I knew what the problem was maybe I could do something about this.” He answered, “It's the Chinese.” I said, “what do you mean it's the Chinese?” Although the government didn't do it at that time, it had been considering opening relations with the People's Republic, and it did not want a precedent that would permit ethnic Chinese in Indonesia to attend Chinese schools. I was able to go to the appropriate minister and propose that there be a grandfather clause for all schools developed after this date that new rules would apply. That solved that problem.

Q: How did you find dealing with the Indonesian government? Was it effective? Could it deliver?

NEWSOM: Oh, yes. There was a group of American educated technocrats, called the Berkeley Mafia because many of them had been to the University of California at Berkeley, who did an amazing job of bringing the economy out of the sad state that Sukarno had left it in. They were a very competent group. The most dramatic evidence of this was related to the financial problems of the Indonesian National Oil Company, called Pertamina. Pertamina had been developed under the enthusiastic leadership of a friend of President Suharto by the name of Ibnu Sutowo. Ibnu Sutowo had really built up an empire within an empire around Pertamina. This was a time in the mid-''70s when American banks, as well as European banks, were flooded with Euro dollars, and they were trying to get rid of them by lending them to what they thought were oil rich countries. The bankers used to flow through Indonesia. I used to tell them, “I hope you're taking a good look at this country because its got 10% of OPEC's production, and 80% of OPEC's population. It's not Saudi Arabia.” But as one banker once said to me, “everybody else is lending them money, we should lend money too.” One day a representative of a small bank in Dallas came in to see me. He'd been in to see the economic counselor and had said his bank was a part of a syndicate of banks that had made a big loan to Indonesia. Indonesia had just defaulted

on the interest payment and his bank was going to call the loan; that is, they were going to require that Indonesia repay the whole thing. This could have created a serious crisis of confidence. I got in touch with this man and asked that he give me 48 hours to see if I could resolve the problem without his calling the loan. He agreed. I got hold of one of the technocrats and explained the situation. One of the things that had happened was that these banks had been lending money to Indonesia on the assumption that the Indonesian government stood behind the loans to Pertamina. They didn't. But the Indonesian official recognized the significance of this development and within the 48 hours got the Indonesian government to stand behind this loan. That triggered a revelation that Pertamina was some three billion dollars in debt. And Widjojo, who was the leader of the technocrats, went to President Suharto. This was quite remarkable given the fact that a non-military technocrat was going to President Suharto and to tell him that the enterprise of Suharto's close friend, Sutowo, was in deep financial difficulty. He did that and to Suharto's great credit, he accepted that fact. He pushed Ibnu Sutowo aside, put another very capable army officer in charge and named a committee to unravel the debt problem. Indonesia saved its credit status and worked its way out of what could have been a serious problem. But the point is that these very competent and alert technocrats had both the courage and the prestige to get the President to dismantle a very fragile commercial empire.

Q: But it also points up the role of the American ambassador. Often it's said the American ambassador does not pay attention to the commercial-economic side. Obviously you played the appropriate role. What was your impression when you went there, and while you were there, of Suharto?

NEWSOM: Suharto is a Javanese with strong beliefs in mysticism and the syncrectic religious foundation of Indonesia — a combination of Islam with Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian influences. He is reported periodically to consult a Javanese seer, or dukun. He lacks charisma and is a somewhat private man. I haven't seen him now for many, many years, but when I knew him he was never totally comfortable with foreigners. This was partly a language problem. He had a kind of set routine when he was meeting visitors

and would launch into a long monologue on “national resilience (katehanan national) I used to suggest to visitors who had some topic to discuss with the president that, after his greeting, they state immediately their reason for being there. If a visitor did not do that immediately, any hopes of a useful exchange were dashed. He was intelligent, shrewd, and certainly led Indonesia out of a difficult period. He had the good sense to rely on a lot of talent that was around him.

Q: You were there during a period when not only human rights, but also efforts to impose international morality on business and payoffs, corruption, etc. were present. Acts were coming out of Congress, but essentially we're talking about the problems of Lockheed, Hughes and EXXON, major scandals that were going on. How did you deal with these?

NEWSOM: My general conclusion was that if an American company came in with a unique product, or unique technology, and came in first to deal with the technocrats — the officials ostensibly in charge of the economy — they should come in without any side payments or attempts to incorporate Suharto's relatives into their corporate structure. If they were coming in with a product that was in competition with a local product, then playing by our rules was much more difficult. But not impossible. One of the problems was that some American companies concluded that they had to make some special arrangements before they ever went to Indonesia. They came through Hong Kong and they'd be approached by somebody in Hong Kong who said that they were the third cousin of the president, and the only way they could get business there was by taking them on board. Some American companies got badly taken by people like that. I always urged them not to make any side deals. Come first to Jakarta and see the people who are ostensibly in charge; they might succeed. If they were in competition with a local firm, or someone else who got there first, they might be approached, and that's their problem. I told them I did not encourage any special arrangements, but I did encourage business executives to try to come in without them.

Q: What about Hughes, Lockheed? These were companies that had a reputation in the Far East, and elsewhere, of coming in with big money to be handed about.

NEWSOM: I don't remember any. There were no problems in Indonesia. Maybe I was just ignorant of them.

Q: With corruption, how did you find corruption in Indonesia?

NEWSOM: It was present. I gather it's much worse now. The problem with corruption is that, if you're an ambassador, you never really get to the bottom of it. Everybody denies that they're involved in any shady practices, “it's those other people, it's not us.” The American embassy has no formal investigative or other jurisdiction under the Corrupt Practices Act.

Q: How did the Vietnam war play while you were there? This was 1975 when we left Saigon. I mean the whole thing fell apart, and Indonesia was considered one of the dominoes at the time earlier on. At that point how did it play?

NEWSOM: The Indonesians at the time that I was there were members of the International Control Commission, ICC, along with the Poles, the Canadians, and Iranians. They had a very different view of how the war was doing than we did. Although Sukarno was overthrown, his policy of neutrality, non-alignment, remained. I've forgotten now whether Indonesia had formal diplomatic relations with Vietnam, but they were in touch with Hanoi all through the war. The most dramatic evidence of the Indonesian attitude was clear when Graham Martin came to Indonesia. He was US ambassador in Vietnam at the time. He came to Indonesia in January of 1975, and talked to the Indonesians about how “we really don't have any problems in Vietnam, it's all the little old ladies in tennis shoes that are stirring up all this.” And afterwards one of the Indonesians in their quiet way said to me that they were very much interested in hearing Ambassador Martin, but he “must be in a different country than we are.” There were Indonesians that would say they were

grateful that the US was there because Indonesia could have been next. But that was relatively rare. The Indonesians were proud of the fact that they had themselves blocked a communist take-over, and they didn't want to perpetuate the idea that it was the United States or anyone else that had prevented the communist advance.

Q: There is a theory that the United States sort of created the climate...we're talking about '65, so the Indonesians could resist the Russians.

NEWSOM: There weren't many Indonesians whom I knew of that wanted to give us credit for that.

Q: How about Henry Kissinger? He was renowned for having his eye on several countries like China, Soviet Union, maybe Germany, but other places there was almost no interest. Did you find this was true of Henry Kissinger in Indonesia?

NEWSOM: He came with President Ford to Indonesia once while I was there, and they were largely interested in China. I didn't have a feeling that he had any great interest in Indonesia.

Q: How did the Ford visit go? A presidential visit is always rather traumatic.

NEWSOM: It went reasonably well. The Indonesians went into East Timor right afterward which cast something of a pall over it, but there were no untoward incidents during the visit.

Q: Vietnam fell in the spring of '75 and our pulling out of there in Cambodia was ignominious. Did that do anything to the way the Indonesians looked at us?

NEWSOM: No, I don't remember that. I remember they were glad it was over. I think they kind of felt we were fighting the wrong war in the wrong place at the wrong time. And our

withdrawal removed some of the burden on them of explaining close relationships with the United States and the Vietnam problems.

Q: What about with China? We were going through this rather heady period where we were opening up relations with China at that time. In a way, it was a little bit of a honeymoon period, but the Indonesians had their own Chinese problems. How did that work out as far as you saw it?

NEWSOM: They didn't have any problem with US relations with China. I think they felt that move was long overdue. The Indonesian military were convinced that the Chinese were behind the abortive coup of 1965 and the murder of seven key military officers. That, combined with their general suspicion of the three million Chinese in Indonesia whose citizenship allegiances they questioned, led them to strongly oppose normalizing with China. They feared the influence of a Chinese diplomatic mission on their own Chinese. It was a domestic Indonesian matter, and didn't reflect a general opposition to the Chinese leadership. They had a lot of dealings with China through Hong Kong, but they also had some dealings with Taiwan. But the feeling against a Chinese official presence in Indonesia was very strong.

Q: What about the Soviets? The Soviets at one time had gotten very heavy-handedly into Indonesia giving them cruisers, and other things.

NEWSOM: The Soviet vessels were given to a previous regime and were barely activated when I was there. They had normal relations with the Soviet Union. That was not a problem for us.

Q: The Soviets weren't a major player at that time?

NEWSOM: Not in Indonesia, no.

Q: You mentioned Timor. This became a long running sore, I think, between relations, particularly with Australia, but also with the United States and other countries because of the perceived heavy hand of the Indonesians in occupying...was it East Timor?

NEWSOM: The Portuguese revolution took place in 1974. I think Suharto genuinely tried to negotiate something with the Portuguese for a year at least, but he couldn't find any interlocutors from Lisbon who really could make a decision. It is my impression that he restrained the military from going in for quite a while. To understand the Timor question you get back to the Chinese. The Indonesian military were convinced that the independence movement on Timor was Chinese backed, and they were not about to permit one-half of one of their islands to be an independent entity backed by the Chinese. They didn't handle it very well, but I don't think there was ever any doubt that that Indonesian government, and maybe any Indonesian government, would oppose an independence in one-half of an Indonesian island.

Q: Did we get involved? Or was this sort of a watching brief at the time this was going on?

NEWSOM: We were not involved. After the Indonesians moved in we tried, largely unsuccessfully, to get the Indonesians to admit international relief agencies, international observers. We did get the Catholic Relief Agency in there, but as long as I was there it was a pretty closed territory.

Q: Was there much pressure from Congress, or elsewhere, to do something about the situation at the time you were there?

NEWSOM: There were some voices in the United States but the main fervor was in Australia.

Q: What about Japanese economic influence? Was this becoming a worrisome problem as far as we were concerned?

NEWSOM: The Japanese were very active. I arrived there just after the riots of January 1974 when Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka had visited Indonesia and there had been riots against his visit. The attitude toward the Japanese was a somewhat ambivalent one. The Indonesians were grateful to the Japanese for creating the atmosphere in which their independence movement grew during the war. They shared the view of other Asians about Japanese brutality, but they were prepared to do business with the Japanese. Suharto had had a Japanese military instructor during the war, during the Japanese occupation. He used to invite him back annually for a visit. As I say, it was complicated.

Q: Were we passive by-standers as far as watching the Japanese economic penetration?

NEWSOM: We worked hard to promote American interests there. The biggest competition was in major infrastructure projects. The Japanese had the advantage of a little less rigidity as far as special arrangements were concerned. But they also were highly competitive in terms of tying aid packages into commercial deals. But American business did reasonably well while we were there. One of the big contracts was for the first Indonesian satellite, which went to an American company. This really established modern communications among all the islands.

Q: This is the 31st of October, Halloween, 1995. While you were in Indonesia, were you still having the boat people problem from Vietnam?

NEWSOM: I left there in '77. My association with the boat people problem was after I returned to Washington and was Under Secretary and involved in the coordination of refugee assistance. I had only a little bit in my brief time in the Philippines. The boat people problem didn't really arise until '77-'78.

Q: In Indonesia, was there a Peace Corps?

NEWSOM: No. The Indonesians never accepted the Peace Corps. They had a kind of youth corps of their own. I think there was a Peace Corps at one time, but Sukarno threw

it out. The Suharto government was always very careful not to go too far from the non-aligned path on policies that had been established by Sukarno. On economic policies they were prepared to make major changes, but where there was a political aspect to it, they were more reluctant.

Q: Aid was multilateral, wasn't it?

NEWSOM: Yes, there was a consultative group on Indonesia, originally chaired by the Dutch, and that's the way it was for most of the time that I was there. Later the Indonesians got mad at the Dutch, if I remember, over the Dutch reaction to East Timor. But the Intergovernmental Group on Indonesia (IGGI) was a very effective mechanism for the coordination of international relief. The general aid picture in Indonesia while I was there was a positive one. International coordination was reasonably good. Our program over the years had considerable impact, primarily in the training of people for positions in both government and the private sector.

Q: Were many going to the United States for advanced studies?

NEWSOM: Yes. I remember the figure of 6,000 representing the participant trainees who had come from Indonesia to the United States over the life of the aid program up to my time there, up to '77.

Q: Some countries will send their people out, but then the establishment doesn't like to see these new kids on the block.

NEWSOM: When Suharto came in, he took advantage of a relatively small group of mostly American educated Indonesians. Many of them who had gone to the University of California at Berkeley came to be known as the Berkeley Mafia. They were instrumental in turning around Indonesia's economy after the Sukarno period, and they were very positive about sending people abroad for education because they had benefitted from it themselves. One of the remarkable things about Indonesia, at least when I was there,

is that the Indonesians that were sent abroad came home. A very large number of them went into the jobs for which they were trained, unlike some other countries in Asia where students tried to stay in the US

Q: You then moved to the Philippines. Is that right, in 1977? Why did that assignment come about?

NEWSOM: I had completed over three years in Indonesia. It was deemed to be time to move, and there was a vacancy in the Philippines. So it was a normal Foreign Service transfer.

Q: Was Carter in by the time you moved?

NEWSOM: Yes. I went to Indonesia under Ford, then went to the Philippines under Carter.

Q: When you went out to the Philippines in 1977 were there any things on your list that you really wanted to do?

NEWSOM: Preserving the bases, Subic Bay and Clark Field. There had been a negotiation for an extension of the agreement on the two bases that had started under Bill Sullivan that was still unresolved. We had our first post-war agreement on the bases in the 1950s giving us a 99-year occupancy. At some point before I got there, that period had been changed to 25 years in order to meet internal Philippine political problems. The question I faced was whether to try to extend the agreement beyond the 25 years. A scholar can get all of this out of the records, but there was a date that the Filipinos had set...I guess what the situation was, that while they accepted that we had a 25 year agreement, they wanted to revise some aspects of the agreement. Anyway, the base question was really the primary question.

The second question was to try to deal with the human rights problems in the Philippines under Marcos. The Carter administration was putting greater emphasis on this and there

was an effort to get President Marcos to release some political opponents from jail. One of the things that I worked on, but with somewhat tragic consequences, was to get Benigno Aquino out of jail.

Q: He had been sentenced to death at one point.

NEWSOM: We got that reversed, but he was still in jail. We got Marcos to agree to let him go to Harvard, which is where he went. But then, of course, when he came back from there he was assassinated.

Q: What was the problem with Aquino as far as Marcos was concerned?

NEWSOM: They were two men of the same basic background, who wanted the same job.

Q: There ain't room enough in this country for both of us.

NEWSOM: And Aquino was pictured as a great democrat, and maybe he was. But if you looked at his background it came out that he came from the same kind of oligarchical society that Marcos had come from.

Q: Did you find you had a problem with the Carter administration on human rights? This was sort of a brand new thing. We had always had this thrust, but you had a very aggressive Pat Derian, and others. I know we were feeling it a bit when I was in South Korea around the same time. It would seem to be getting in the way of other matters we considered more important.

NEWSOM: No, I didn't feel that because I was very sympathetic with the thrust, and while in Indonesia I had played a role in getting the Indonesians to release some 30,000 political detainees that were held over from the 1965 abortive coup in Indonesia. Having observed revolutions in the Middle East, I had a very strong feeling that, if the United States was going to survive in countries where we had an identification with the government, and that government was overthrown, we had to demonstrate that we were not associated, or

identified, with some of the practices of that government. When I was in the Department in the Bureau of African Affairs, I was involved in the very early moves in the Congress to establish human rights as a part of the American diplomatic agenda. There's a total misunderstanding of the way human rights developed as a primary concern of the Carter administration. Very few people look at the situation and realize that when Carter came into office there were eleven bits of legislation that required that human rights be taken into account in economic aid, military aid, export credits, a variety of US activities. If one was going to be true to the legislation, there was no way that this could be ignored. This thrust didn't bother me at all, and I endorsed it. And I think that one of the reasons that we were able to survive in the Philippines, where we didn't survive revolutions against friendly rulers elsewhere, was because my predecessors and I went out of our way to demonstrate in various ways to the Philippine people that we did not condone some of the practices of the Marcos administration.

Q: How would you tackle something like this? You've got bases, you've got a dictatorship essentially, and you've got Benito Aquino and others in jail. How does an ambassador go about doing something?

NEWSOM: Well, you can speak out on the subject. You don't have to criticize the regime to which you're accredited, but you can talk about the interests of the American people in this subject as demonstrated by the legislation and by presidential statements — fewer in the Reagan administration than in the Carter administration. Although if you look at the Reagan administration which came in vowing to do away with the Assistant Secretary for Humanitarian Affairs, they found that this was a Congressionally mandated position and they couldn't do anything about it. So they had to turn around and embrace some of the same points of view as the Carter administration. But you could do it by speaking out; you can also do it by gestures. One thing that we did infuriated Mrs. Marcos, but I think sent a signal through the Philippine people. There was a Jesuit by the name of Father James Reuter, an American who had at one time been close to the Marcoses but had broken with them and had started a Catholic newspaper, or magazine, which the Marcoses

subsequently closed down. Reuter ran an orphanage in the poorer section of Manila, an orphanage for paraplegic children. We put on a benefit for Father Reuter's orphanage in the American embassy. That sent a signal to the Philippines society that we were not intimidated by the fact that the Marcoses don't like Reuter. We're prepared to help him. Jean, my wife, had lunch with Corazon Aquino on one occasion. Mrs. Marcos heard about it and invited us both to lunch on her yacht at the same time that Jean was going to meet with Corazon Aquino. Jean kept her appointment with Corazon Aquino, and I went on the yacht. Mrs. Marcos conspicuously ignored me, talked to the Russian and the Chinese. I felt good about that.

Q: During this time did you sit down and have frank discussions with Marcos?

NEWSOM: Yes.

Q: How did he respond?

NEWSOM: Sometimes with remarkable candor. Once I went in under instructions to talk to him about torture and reports we had of torture being carried out by his security forces. He said something to me like, “Well, you know Mr. Ambassador, I have to depend on these men for my security, and I can't always be monitoring closely what they're doing.” You get the standard responses: “You don't understand our country, or we have a bill of rights in our constitution just like you do” etc. But one aspect that was infuriating related to visitors. A congressional delegation including members of Congress who'd stand up and denounce Marcos on the floor of the House for his violations of human rights. So we'd get ready to go in to meet the president and I would say, You have spoken up critically of Marcos' human rights policies in the House. I want you to say the same things to him here. But they would avoid the subject when they met Marcos. They would say, “Oh, we're here on a friendship mission, Mr. Ambassador. That's your job.” If they realized how it damaged my credibility they didn't pay any attention. I was the one who would tell Marcos that the Philippines had a real problem in the House of Representatives because of the perception of Philippine

activities on human rights. Marcos would say, “They came here, they didn't say anything to me.”

Q: In these delegations were there any really solid supporters, Senators or Congressmen, with a beat in your area that you could call on to...

NEWSOM: I was there just a short time, but I don't remember any members of Congress coming out and emphasizing problems of human rights. The Marcoses were two of the greatest artists in winning people over, even people who had been critics, and they were marvelous actors in putting on a demeanor and an approach that just swept the average American visitor away. It was something an ambassador had to contend with.

Q: Did you have a problem with the staff of your embassy? I'm thinking of a book which I have now read, Dancing with the Dictators. But essentially the title raises the thing that often the Marcoses would coopt people. They would have lots of parties, and things like this. Was this a problem?

NEWSOM: My staff when I was there pretty well saw things the way I did. We were there as the official representatives; we were accredited to the government of the Philippines, which Marcos headed. We had a lot of business that was important to American interests. So we dealt with them properly. But we didn't go out of our way to pander to them. The result was, I'm sure, that I was not a very popular ambassador and probably some of the members of my staff weren't popular with the Marcoses. The Marcoses, particularly Mrs. Marcos, wanted to coopt every American ambassador. She watched you closely, and if you were going to do something that she didn't like, she would try to interfere or get you to come to something that they were doing. Sometimes Mrs. Marcos would just show up at a function and consider herself invited. So it was an interesting tour, but I was never very enamored of the Marcoses.

Q: What was the government situation when you were there?

NEWSOM: Well, Marcos was clearly in charge. The Congress was in suspension. Martial law was still on. So, while you dealt with other ministers and other officials, ultimately everything came back to Marcos.

Q: On business matters, say the bases, could you talk to him?

NEWSOM: Oh, yes. Carlos Romulo was the foreign minister, a nice man, old at the time, and kind of sad because he was a man that did have a certain stature. But he pandered so to Marcos that it was sad. However, Marcos was the man you had to deal with. I had a pretty good relationship with him, maybe he in some ways respected the fact that I was prepared to raise difficult questions with him.

Q: How did he respond to a difficult question?

NEWSOM: He was a lawyer, and he liked to respond with legalistic answers. But sometimes his responses were helpful. Mrs. Marcos got the idea that the UN General Assembly should meet in Manila. This was part of her great dream. And it was a horror to the US government because of the cost, and the setting of precedent, and moving the General Assembly, etc. So I went to Marcos and said, “You know we understand the first lady's interest in this; there's certainly no place in the world that we'd rather see the General Assembly than in Manila, but it raises a lot of questions of precedent, and cost.” He said, “The first lady feels very strongly about this. Is there some way you could work out a formula in New York for thanking the Philippines for this gesture, and maybe going on to something else?” That's what we did.

Q: How about the American military? I think of the military leaders, the people coming out from the Defense Department. Did they understand what we were after, or were they sort of fixed on the bases being there, and this is where we're going to be for the rest of our lives. How did you find them?

NEWSOM: I found the base commanders, certainly, in particular, the admiral at Subic Bay, very sophisticated, and aware of some of the problems of staying in the Philippines. I had negotiated other base arrangements in Libya, Saudi Arabia and, Morocco, so working with the military on a base negotiation was nothing new. I generally found the military easy to work with if you understood their position, what they wanted to do. If you came up with a dramatic variation in a position and if you could explain it to them and get their acceptance, there was no problem. I always tried, and with reasonable success, to avoid situations in which you had telegrams going back from the post demonstrating divisions in a delegation between the military and non-military members. We tried to work things out in field. I think we did so reasonably well.

Q: How about what's just come up very recently on Okinawa. Did you have problems about the military...

NEWSOM: Oh, enormous problems in the lower-rank military relations with the Filipino community, a constant problem. One of the things we settled in the negotiations that I brought to conclusion was the question of guarding of the base perimeters. Previously there had been Marine guards around the base perimeters, and the bases were the hunting ground for the poor Filipinos living in the villages around, and so they were constantly infiltrating, trying to steal stuff. With American military personnel out there, it was just one continuing series of incidents of Americans stopping and searching women, and then being accused of rape. Or Americans being accused of beating up Filipinos, etc. So we switched it around in the agreement so there was a Filipino guard around the perimeters, and as far as I know that worked well enough until the end of the agreement.

No, when you have...I've forgotten how many thousand troops we had there at that time, face to face with poor Filipino communities, incidents are inescapable.

Q: Moving to another area. What about immigration? I'm an ex-consular officer, and of course the Philippines has always been a major consular post. How did this impact on your embassy?

NEWSOM: It was one of the few embassies in the world that had an officer solely to deal with fraud, false passports, false papers, false birth certificates. The Filipinos were geniuses at coming up with false documents. We had long lines outside the embassy all the time, and you rarely ran into a Filipino who didn't have a cousin or a brother or something for whom he wanted a visa. So this was a big part of the relationship.

Q: What about American business interest in the Philippines? I've never served there, I have a feeling that many of these people have been entrenched since the beginning of the century, and they have almost extra territorial privileges, or at least felt that way. If true, would have made it rather difficult because this is not a way to win friends and influence people.

NEWSOM: Remember, a lot of people left during the war. But there were still some American families spread through the Philippines. I don't remember them as being a problem. One or two of them that I came to know were very helpful in helping us to understand things in the Philippines, but it wasn't a problem as I recall.

Q: How did you find the Carter administration? They talked big on human rights, but Carter seemed to be as coopted by the Shah of Iran as Nixon and Kissinger had been. I was wondering, did Carter ever get involved one way or the other with Marcos, or Mrs. Marcos?

NEWSOM: Generally, my recollection is, that Carter tried to hold the Marcoses at arm's length. I don't remember whether the Marcoses visited Washington during the Carter administration; they certainly didn't on my watch. I know they were delighted when Reagan came in and they were able to visit Washington. There were people in the Carter

administration who recognized that we had to deal with the Marcoses, so it wasn't a complete isolation. Dick Holbrooke was the Assistant Secretary for East Asia at the time, and was a realist. So with Marcos himself, and with his government, we had reasonable relations but there were no particularly flowery words that were used. There's always, whatever the inclinations of the President, there's always these difficult balancing acts between dealing with rulers with whom you have to make agreements, and distancing yourself from some of their less desirable features.

Q: Vice President Walter Mondale came out to visit in May of '78. Were you still there at that time.

NEWSOM: No, I left in April of '77.

Q: There was a Muslim revolt going on, and your old stamping grounds of Libya was supposedly involved. Was this of concern to us?

NEWSOM: I don't remember much about that. I did visit Mindanao but the revolt was not active. I don't recall any major incidents.

Q: It's 1978, you're finished with the Philippines, how did you get your next appointment?

NEWSOM: When Philip Habib had his heart attack, and had to leave the position of Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Mr. Vance called me to see if I would come back and take the position. This was in March of 1978, and I couldn't say no to an opportunity like that, so I proceeded back to Washington, although I had only been in the Philippines a relatively short time.

Q: At that time the job was called Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs.

NEWSOM: That's right, it still is.

Q: They have changed some of these titles around. Could you explain what that position was at the time, and how it was perceived, and how it had been used?

NEWSOM: There are two approaches to the position, depending really on the desires of the Secretary of State. It can be a kind of high-level special assistant to the Secretary working with him on the problems he seizes on. Or it can be a position that relieves him of a number of issues, and serves as a coordinator of the geographic bureaus. Traditionally, also, the Under Secretary for Political Affairs has been the principal link below the Secretary with the Defense Department and with the Central Intelligence Agency.

Q: The way I understood it, it represents in the normal State Department as the top professional position to the Foreign Service.

NEWSOM: It has been that at times. Alex Johnson occupied it for many years, and Phil Habib, of course, was a professional. And until the Reagan administration I think it was seen as a non-political professional position. And if I'm correct, I think both Alex Johnson and Phil Habib were appointed in the administration of one party and continued over into the administration of another. The Reagan administration partially broke that pattern. My successor was Walter Stoessel, who was a professional, but then later he was succeeded by Robert Kimmitt, a political appointee, and Arnold Kantor, who succeeded Kimmitt, had been in the State Department as an arms control specialist, was somewhat out of the pattern. Now the job is held by Peter Tarnoff who was a Foreign Service officer, left at the end of the Carter administration, and then came back in during the Clinton administration.

Q: When you took over in the spring of '78, in the first place, how did Secretary Vance...what did he tell you he was going to do with you?

NEWSOM: I don't remember precise instructions. I do remember conceiving of the job as coordinating the work of the geographic bureaus, the political-military bureau, the International Organizations Bureau, and picked up responsibility for a number of issues

that Phil had been working on. As time evolved, I became sort of the utility in-fielder on the 7th floor picking up new issues, relieving the Secretary of responsibility for issues that he had neither the time nor perhaps the inclination to deal with. I did some Congressional testifying on issues that others preferred not to touch — like Billy Carter, President Carter's brother, and his relations with Libya. I was very much involved in the Nicaraguan problem — how to deal with the collapse of the Somoza regime. While Camp David was going on in September of '78, the Arab-Israeli negotiations, I was taking care of the other issues that were on the table at the time, including Central America, Poland, Iran. Then as the Shah's regime collapsed in Iran, I was put in charge of the task of phasing down the substantial American presence in Iran. We had some 40,000 citizens in business and education, and various other occupations in Iran whom we had eventually to get out of the country. I was rather on the fringes of the hostage crisis, but mainly because I was dealing with the other issues of security of citizens in Iran. It was a mixed bag.

Q: Let's start at the beginning, then we'll pick up these various themes. When you arrived was there something that Phil Habib said, this is something I'm leaving to you and you've really got to settle, or any things of this nature?

NEWSOM: As I recall Phil was out of action when I arrived. When he got out of the hospital we did talk, and he would call me from time to time with advice. But my principal contact was really the Secretary. I don't really recall that initial period except that it was rather like being thrown quickly into a very active scene.

Q: Let's talk a bit about how you perceived your relations with Cyrus Vance. I think of him as being a trouble shooter. He'd gone out to Cyprus where there were problems. And a lawyer, as with our present Secretary of State Warren Christopher, tend to look upon a situation and a problem and deal with that. Here we're talking about a huge array of responsibilities. How did Cyrus Vance, during the time you worked with him, deal with all these responsibilities?

NEWSOM: He delegated well. We had a meeting every morning at 7:40 a.m. of the Secretary, Warren Christopher, myself, Peter Tarnoff who was then the head of the Secretariat, Tony Lake who was the head of Policy Planning Staff, Hodding Carter who was the spokesperson. We went over the events of the previous 24 hours. The Secretary would assign, or reinforce responsibilities, then we took off from there. I would touch base with him where I needed to. Once you were given responsibility he pretty well assumed that you would carry it out.

Q: Secretary Vance had obviously been involved with special missions, and he'd already been Secretary of State for almost two years by the time you got there, or a year and a half.

NEWSOM: Yes, about 15 months.

Q: How was he perceived at that time? I'm thinking some Secretaries of State are considered rather strong leaders, others are not.

NEWSOM: I think he was highly respected, and I think there was a general recognition that he had problems because of the unwillingness of President Carter sometimes to make a clear decision between positions held by Vance and positions held by Brzezinski, particularly relating to the Soviet Union. But he was a man who was greatly respected, certainly in the Department, and I think generally throughout the government. But the problems between the Secretary of State and the National Security advisor were not unique to the Carter administration.

Q: What were your relations with Brzezinski?

NEWSOM: They were cordial. I didn't have much to do with him directly. I dealt more with David Aaron, his principal deputy. We got along fine. Brzezinski, if you read his book, lumped all of us in a kind of wimpish category from the Secretary on down because we

had somewhat different ideas than he did about East-West issues. But it was a reasonably cordial relationship.

Q: The big issue, of course, was East-West...we're talking about the Soviet Union, and Carter came in with the idea that maybe one could come to a better understanding with the Soviet Union. Am I correct on this?

NEWSOM: Yes. I think he felt confrontation was not going to gain anything. I wasn't there in the first year. The first year they had a major debate within the administration over what to do about Somalia, and whether to reinforce the Somalis to go to war with the Marxist Ethiopians. The State Department held out against that. That was the beginning of the division over policies toward the USSR. Brzezinski placed a lot of emphasis on the Soviet activities in the third world, in Angola, Indochina, his 'arc of crisis' concept. We in the State Department tended to see these more as local issues exacerbated by Soviet intervention, but not necessarily part of a Soviet grand plan. We had some quiet negotiations with the Cubans, for example, over getting the Bay of Pigs prisoners released, and we were under strict admonition from Brzezinski that if the Cubans raised anything else, we were to raise the need for them to get their troops out of Angola. That precluded any wider discussions with the Cubans.

Q: Looking back on this, but at the time, first you had Kissinger, then you had Brzezinski, both of these being academic political scientists...we're now speaking at the Georgetown School of Foreign Service, but tend to see things in big terms, and movements. Whereas a Foreign Service officer considers each country being unique. There may be internal things, and that these so-called great movements probably when translated into individual countries, tend to get dissipated. It's a completely different viewpoint isn't it?

NEWSOM: A somewhat different viewpoint, and I think it's not just the Foreign Service officers. A man like Cyrus Vance, a lawyer, also saw problems in their regional dimensions, or their national dimensions. He saw them as problems, not part of some

grander sweep. I do think that Kissinger's training did create in him quite a remarkable sense of the inter-connectedness of problems. You'd go in and see him about something in the Middle East, and he would say, how does that relate to what might happen in China, or Russia. He was more pragmatic than he was ideological, and part of that pragmatism was based on a kind of sense of global connections. Brzezinski was more ideological in his approach to issues. So it was not so much with Brzezinski, well, how is this connected with that, but what are the Soviets up to?

Q: Talking about the Soviets at this time, there was a big fervor over the so-called Soviet brigade in Cuba. Did you get involved in that?

NEWSOM: Yes, I wrote a book about it.

Q: Could you explain a bit about what that was?

NEWSOM: In March of 1978, Dr. Brzezinski, concerned that there were Soviet-backed activities going on in Cuba, asked the intelligence community to review unclassified intercepted traffic from Cuba. Cuba had been taken off the priority list of intelligence gathering, and certainly of aerial surveillance, primarily for budgetary reasons. In the review of that traffic there came up references to a Soviet brigade. On that basis, in July of '79, it was agreed that SR-71 flights, high-level aerial reconnaissance, would begin over Cuba. That aerial reconnaissance revealed a tank unit of brigade size in a camp where the language used was clearly Russian. So it was assumed that this was a Russian unit. And then other photography disclosed that it had moved out of the camp and was doing maneuvers on a beach in south Cuba. The intelligence community then put out an intelligence note saying that aerial photographs had discovered a “combat” brigade in Cuba.

There's nothing that triggers leaks more in Washington than some kind of sensational word. Senator Richard Stone of Florida, with a big Cuban constituency in Florida, and politically harmed by the fact that he had supported the Panama Canal Treaty, was looking

for ways to enhance his support in the Cuban community, so he was constantly looking for information about activities in Cuba that he could use to embarrass the administration, and show his interest in Cuba.

In July of '78 someone in the Defense Department tipped him off, not to the brigade, but to reports of the Soviets' building a submarine base in Cuba. So in July he asked Harold Brown, the Secretary of Defense, in a Senate hearing whether the Soviets were preparing a base in Cuba. And Brown said there was no information to that effect and Stone got a commitment in a letter that, if there were a Soviet base, the United States would do something about it.

In my office, we saw the intelligence note about the “combat” brigade, and we weren't planning to do anything about it. Then a reporter from Aviation Week called a member of my staff to ask about this combat brigade in Cuba. I went to Vance and said, “This could well leak. I think we ought to inform Senator Stone and others of this development.” So we did. We informed Stone and Clement Zablocki, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs committee, and a lot of others, including Frank Church, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Church was campaigning in Idaho in a very difficult campaign, which he subsequently lost. So he immediately went to the airwaves and demanded that the administration get rid of this brigade. And, of course, Stone immediately wanted to know what this was all about? Is this a base? Everything like that relating to Cuba immediately brings up specters of the Cuban missile crisis.

We got in touch with the Soviets who came back and said: there's nothing new, this has been there for 16 years. Nobody was prepared to believe them because it was not a response that would have washed with the Congress and elsewhere.

Anatoly Dobrynin, the Soviet ambassador, was in Moscow at the time; his father was ill. Vance was away, but came back. Vance hoped that he could finesse the growing uproar

over the Soviet brigade. The Soviets, however, were not prepared to make even cosmetic changes that might have taken the Carter administration off the hook. Ultimately, Carter made some additional naval deployments in the Caribbean and the matter was largely dropped.

In the midst of this a transcript of a Senate hearing was brought to my attention. It revealed that Robert McNamara had told the Senate Arms Forces Committee in 1962 after the Cuban missile crisis, that the Soviets would be leaving a unit in Cuba at the very place where this unit was identified. The principal lesson out of all of this was that the State Department and government, has no institutional memory.

What I didn't know, also, when I called Church was that in the Cuban missile crisis, before July of 1962, rumors had reached the White House of Soviet missiles in Cuba. And Kennedy had called Frank Church, a young senator at that time, and asked him on behalf of the administration to deny these rumors. So this was a repeat of what he had been through. His demand for action was understandable.

Anyway, I've written a little book on it, because it is an interesting indication of how the political use of intelligence can create an unnecessary incident.

Q: Why don't we move more or less for this period geographically. The fall of the Somoza regime in Nicaragua turned out to be a long lasting concern because of the rise of the Sandinistas. This was obviously not your area of expertise at the time. What were you getting from ARA, and how comfortable did you feel with the reporting and outlook towards this?

NEWSOM: Underlying this whole administration were differences of views between the National Security staff and the State Department. These were manifested particularly in the Central American area. Bob Pastor dealt with Latin America on the National Security Council staff. Pete Vaky was the Assistant Secretary for the American Republics (ARA), and then he was succeeded by Bill Bowdler. I had very great confidence in the

ARA bureau. I think they served us well. My task was primarily to deal with some of the Congressional aspects, and occasionally with the problems that may have arisen because of different perceptions between us and the NSC. I think the NSC was concerned, as is their proper role, with the domestic-political fallout of Central American events, and these had to be reconciled with what we felt were steps to be taken for our foreign policy purposes.

I had to deal with two members of Congress who were very pro-Somoza. One of them, John Murphy of New York, had been a roommate of Somoza's at some point.

Q: At West Point, wasn't it?

NEWSOM: I think it was West Point. These two congressmen were very much opposed to what they saw as our efforts to undermine Somoza. We saw it, not as an effort to undermine Somoza, but as a way of trying to maintain a moderate government in Nicaragua when all the evidence indicated that Somoza was finished. We started the OAS mediation effort in which there was a three country group, the US, Guatemala and Jamaica, in an effort to negotiate a moderate alternative to Somoza. These two Congressmen would call Somoza and tell him, “Don't pay any attention to what Bowdler and the others are saying, we've got the situation well in hand in Washington.”

Q: Who was the other Congressman?

NEWSOM: Charles Wilson of Texas. It was one of the most blatant efforts by members of Congress to undermine official policy that I've ever experienced.

Q: How did you deal with them? Did you write them off, or try to explain?

NEWSOM: I knew Murphy because he had been involved with the oil business in Indonesia at one time when I was there. Since I was one of the very few people in the Department who knew him, and who he would talk to, I would call him and try to explain

how we saw things. I was never very successful in persuading him that our perception was correct. At one point I remember he made the statement to me when I was talking about Somoza as being undemocratic, he said, 'I know what democracy is, and Somoza practices democracy. I've seen democracy practiced in Staten Island.' Well, I don't know what that said about democracy in Staten Island.

Q: Did you run across any element within the State Department, or elsewhere, as sort of starry-eyed view of what the Sandinistas or the people who were fighting Somoza, or did we have a relatively good fix on those.

NEWSOM: I don't think we had any illusions. Our efforts were directed at creating a conservative political group, including some of Somoza's own supporters whom we felt might gain support within Nicaragua as a whole as an alternative to Somoza. And that was an uphill battle because on the one hand you had the people that thought we should give more support to Somoza, and those that felt that we should perhaps be more interventionist to try to prevent the rise of the Sandinistas. Because of what we were trying to do, we were accused of being starry-eyed. We had some direct encounters. I remember testifying before a Congressional committee to be followed immediately by Frank Carlucci, then deputy director of CIA, who took issue publicly with everything that I had said.

The real problem came after the Sandinistas were in power when you had the classic problem of whether to try to work with such a group by providing them with assistance in the hopes that we can have some influence on them, or assume that they are totally hopeless. We had people in ARA who felt we should try to work with them, and we did get $75 million, I think, in assistance. But that was not a terribly successful policy.

Q: Was the feeling on this policy of giving assistance...this was sort of an litmus test, or what have you, let's see what's happens. I mean was this sort of the feeling on our part?

NEWSOM: You always have the dilemma when a new revolutionary group comes into power. Do you abandon everything you are trying to do in the country and await

developments? Or do you try to work with them in the hopes of having some influence, if not on them, on others in the country? If you abandon everything, it's often much more difficult to get back in when things may be turning. This is an argument that went on after Afghanistan, it went on after Libya, its gone on after every revolution.

Q: What about the White House and NSC, Brzezinski calling the shots. I mean how on the Nicaraguan thing. Did he play much of a role?

NEWSOM: I recall the NSC position pretty much was, you can't work with the Sandinistas. They saw this as a further extension of Cuban influence in Central America. The differences between the State Department, and the NSC, were still there when the Carter administration ended.

Q: Were there any other areas that took your attention other than the normal housekeeping in Latin America during this time?

NEWSOM: Argentina. The junta was in power in Argentina in 1978. A Humphrey-Kennedy amendment to the foreign assistance act called for cutting off all military sales in cooperation with Argentina by October 1, 1978, unless there were improvements in the human rights situation. So I was sent to Argentina sometime in the fall of '78, before this date, to see whether I could create any momentum on human rights issues that might make the application of this amendment unnecessary.

Q: This was the dirty war time, wasn't it?

NEWSOM: That's right. And the Defense Department was very unhappy about what they saw as a State Department effort to cut off military cooperation with this key country in the southern cone. One senior defense official came to me early in my time there, and said, “I hope you can turn around this State Department effort to cut off military arrangements with Argentina; it's not in our interest.” I said, “Well, Mr. Secretary, we may be required to cut off this cooperation by the Humphrey-Kennedy amendment. Would you want this Democratic

administration to go up and ask for the repeal of an amendment carrying the names of two Democratic party stalwarts?" " Oh, no." So that ended that conversation.

My trip to Argentina was unsuccessful because there was such a balance of intrigue among the members of the junta. No one wanted to take any responsibility in accounting for those who had disappeared by permitting an external group to examine human rights. There was nothing they were prepared to do that would have precluded the implementation of this amendment.

Q: Was this essentially the same junta that later got into the Falkland Island? Their crowning glory, I guess. Was your impression that this was not a well coordinated or...

NEWSOM: Each one was looking over his shoulder and other to see here the knife was going to come.

Q: Any other thing in Latin America of major concern?

NEWSOM: Cuba. We had the Mariel boatlift. We tried to turn that around, but we encountered the highly emotional feelings in south Florida about the possibility of recovering grandmothers and cousins. I remember a very difficult meeting that Warren Christopher and I had with a group from Dade County, Florida, with Cuban-American leaders. This is just after the Mariel boatlift began, which, as you know, is when Castro encouraged Cubans to take the small boats and head for the United States. So the White House invited about 40 Cuban-American leaders to come initially for a meeting with Vice President Mondale. As the time approached, and as the politics of this became clearer, Mondale was suddenly unavailable. So it fell to Warren Christopher and me to meet with them. Very shortly after we started, one of the visitors got up and said, "Are we here to talk about overthrowing Castro?" And Warren said, "No, that's not the purpose of this meeting." The visitor said, "Well, if that's not the purpose of this meeting, we're wasting our time." And he got up and, with about half the group, walked out.

Q: It remains a very political issue, particularly in Florida. I take it then you felt this is not a group one could deal with rationally.

NEWSOM: We did have some meetings with Cubans that at the time were very secret. I think they've been mentioned since. The purpose was to work out the release of some of the Bay of Pigs prisoners. The talks were successful in that we did work out a formula for the release of a number of men that had been held since the Bay of Pigs event. We were very much constrained by Dr. Brzezinski in what we could talk about in those meetings. The Cubans wanted always to expand the agenda to talk about the embargo and other US-Cuban relations. But our instructions were that we were to talk about nothing but the prisoner release, and if they wanted to raise other things, we were to talk about Angola, the Cuban troops in Angola. When we talked about the Cuban troops in Angola, the Cuban said that was none of our business: “We're there at the invitation of the Angolan government. We have a long tradition of links with Africa.” So we never got beyond the single issue.

Q: How did you find during the time you were there in that job, your relations with the Bureau of Human Rights, and Pat Derian?

NEWSOM: When I got there, there were some 50 cases as I remember, in which there were differences between the geographic bureaus and the human rights bureau. Neither protagonists wanted to raise the issue to the 7th floor, but yet they were hanging there as unresolved issues. So, as I recall, with Warren Christopher's strong backing...

Q: Warren Christopher was the Under Secretary...

NEWSOM: He was the Deputy Secretary, and he also chaired a committee which was supposed to reconcile human rights issues. We got these cases finally referred to his committee so that they could be resolved. There was a lot of feeling throughout the Carter administration on the part of people in geographic bureaus that the Human Rights Bureau

was exceeding its mandate and creating unnecessary problems. I was always somewhat sympathetic with the Human Rights Bureau because they were trying to deal with some very serious situations such as the one in Argentina. But these were very real examples of the need to reconcile often two opposite objectives, and if I did anything it was to bring cases to a point of reconciliation, rather than just have them fester.

Q: Why had both sides been unwilling to bounce it up to the 7th floor?

NEWSOM: Afraid of losing, afraid of not appearing to be on top of the situation. Maybe feeling that if they didn't confront the situation, it would go away.

Q: How did these get resolved? Was it a mixed bag?

NEWSOM: A lot of them came down to very specific issues of exports, of visits...

Q: We're talking about military visits...

NEWSOM: ...or visits by representatives of some of the countries where human rights violations were occurring. It came down to the specific positions we might take on most favored nation status. They came down to specific issues. And Warren and his committee tried to resolve these on the basis of what seemed to make the most sense politically and diplomatically. Frequently nobody was happy with the resolution but there was a resolution. One of the cases that was very prominent, for example, was whether to supply crowd control equipment to the Shah's regime in Iran in 1978. The Human Rights Bureau was strongly opposed. NEA was for it, and ultimately it was decided to send the riot control equipment. But was on things like that...

Q: Did you find, or example, did Pat Derian have her own constituency, either in Congress or in the White House? Was this a problem?

NEWSOM: She certainly had her own constituency in the Congress. One of the things that happened in the Carter administration was that a number of the members of

Congressional staffs, who had been responsible for launching and successfully getting passed a lot legislation relating to human rights, came up to the State Department as part of Pat Derian's staff. So there was a very close link between members of her staff and members of the Congress who were in favor of human rights legislation. I never had the feeling that her links in the White House were very good. But she did have that strong Congressional constituency.

Q: Moving over to Africa, South Africa I suppose was something you've had to deal with.

NEWSOM: South Africa was an issue. You had the Rhodesian problem, the unilateral declaration of independence, and the Ian Smith government was in power at the time. That was something that Secretary Vance had a very great personal interest in, and I was not very much involved in the negotiations on Rhodesia which Vance handled primarily with Don McHenry, and directly with David Owen who was the British Foreign Secretary at the time. The main African issue that I became involved in was the question of Somalia and the Horn of Africa. Before I came in there had been a basic difference between the State Department and the White House over how to interpret, or how to deal with Somalia. By that time the Mengistu pro-communist regime was in power in Ethiopia. The Somalis had cut off their relations with the Soviet Union, and were looking for help from the west to invade the Ogaden area that had long been in dispute between Ethiopia and Somalia. Because there were Cuban troops helping the Ethiopians, the White House very much wanted us to see Somalia as a chosen instrument to harass the regime in Addis Ababa. The State Department, particularly the Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Dick Moose, who I think was very pressured at the time, felt that Somalia was a morass, that we shouldn't get involved with. So there was a kind of stalemate through most of my time there over Somalia, but it was a matter of constant discussion.

Q: You mentioned that you were very much involved on the Iranian business, but closer in. This is the time of Camp David and the aftermath of Camp David, was that pretty much being dealt with by the President?

NEWSOM: That was very well dealt with by Hal Saunders who was the Assistant Secretary for NEA at the time. Others closely involved with the Secretary included Bill Quandt on the NSC staff, and Herb Hansell of the Legal Advisor's office.

Q: Coming to Iran. This was not an unknown area to you. You arrived on the scene in '78. What was your impression of whither the Shah, and the viability of our policy and where it was going?

NEWSOM: Two or three incidents stand out in my memory about that time. I think it was in April of '78 that Bill Sullivan, our ambassador in Tehran, came in on consultation. In talking to him about how things were there, he made the point that we knew too little about the religious establishment, particularly the Mullahs in Qom, a religious center. But it was very difficult to get a handle on this group because the Shah was strongly opposed to any diplomatic contacts with the religious leaders. Bill was, I think, perceptive in seeing that this was something where things were happening that we didn't know too much about.
I went out to Iran in July of '78 to tell the Shah that we weren't prepared to deliver him a new generation of aircraft. I had a meeting with him. We didn't know anything about his illness at that time. But as I look back at that meeting, I think he was saying things that perhaps we should have taken more seriously at the time. I remember his saying to me that he was interested in reform because he wanted to be sure that he could turn a viable democratic Iran over to his son, the Crown Prince. He was clearly thinking about the end of his regime at that time. Most of our conversation was on Afghanistan, and what had happened in the emergence of the Taraki regime in Afghanistan. As things deteriorated in Iran with the riots in September, our people in the State Department became more and more concerned about what was happening there. We sent three young officers, at least one of whom was fluent in Farsi, out to Iran in September to take a feeling of what was happening there. They came back with a very pessimistic account of the degree to which the Shah and his government seemed to be out of touch with what was happening. Dr. Brzezinski was very strongly opposed to our efforts to find out what was happening in Iran.

He would not listen to these three men when they came back. He excluded Henry Precht, who was the country director for Iran, from NSC meetings in the White House because he felt that Henry and others had an animus toward the Shah and were trying to further his ouster. I was in the middle of this tension between the State Department and the NSC throughout the Iran business. And I frequently had to represent the State Department in meetings in which two opposing views were presented. One, the State Department feeling that the NSC did not realize the degree to which the Shah was being undermined, or was unable to cope with the situation. And Dr. Brzezinski, who was in constant touch with the Iranian ambassador in Washington, Zahedi, insisted that things were alright, and that if the Shah would just exercise the iron fist, all would be well.

Q: This was in a way a continuation of this very personal relationship that Kissinger and Nixon had with the Shah. I've heard reports saying we weren't to have contact with the opposition, we weren't to report bad things about the Shah. I mean, it's a pernicious policy.

NEWSOM: I remember one time when Dr. Brzezinski said he couldn't understand why an army of 300,000 couldn't put down the troubles happening in Iran. What he didn't realize was that half of the 300,000 were conscripts, and that when the Shah weakened there was no military command structure that could really take action. I remember being sent to the telephone to call Bill Sullivan. We had a code word for a coup d'etat, to ask him whether a coup was possible. And Bill uttered an oath over the phone, and said, “Right now our MAAG mission is in a bunker, bullets are flying over them between the Imperial Guard and the air force cadets who have joined the revolution. What the hell are you thinking about?”

Q: Did you feel that the fact you had the NSC hanging on to something we were seeing increasingly as a lost cause, did that have a stifling or an inhibiting effect on how we dealt with the situation? Or maybe it was something we couldn't have dealt with no matter what.

NEWSOM: It didn't help. The Iranian ambassador, who kept insisting that all was well, didn't help because all was not well. But whether anything we could have done would have

reversed the revolution, I don't know. We had proposed at one time to send Ted Eliot, who had been a former director of Iranian affairs, out to Paris to talk to the Ayatollah Khomeini and his group. That was vetoed by the White House. Subsequent events suggested that Khomeini would have treated Eliot as he treated so many visitors from the west with a degree of contempt, and we probably wouldn't have gained very much. We were riding out a revolution.

There was one critical turning point affected by Dr. Brzezinski's activism. When the embassy was invaded the first time in February, actually Valentine's Day, 1979, we were able with the help of a man named Mohammed Yazdi and the prime minister at that time, Bakhtiar, to get the Iranians to help in throwing out the invaders and getting the embassy back. When the hostages were seized in November, we hoped to repeat that by persuading Yazdi and the prime minister to help. But the prime minister had just been at a meeting in Algiers of some group at which Brzezinski was present. And Brzezinski sought him out to talk to him. The fact that he met with Brzezinski damaged his relations with the Ayatollah and his group. When he came back to Iran he no longer had any power. So we had no one with whom we could deal.

Q: What was your role from '80 through the end of the Carter administration with the hostage crisis as far as increasing focus on this. This may have been a significant reason why the Carter administration didn't survive.

NEWSOM: The hostage situation was primarily managed by Hal Saunders and the Secretary himself. I followed it closely, but my only direct contact with it was when I went to Wiesbaden to receive and interview the hostage, Richard Queen, when he was released. I also met the women and black officers who were released earlier. Because Muskie had resigned as of January 19, 1981, I was the interim Secretary of State when the hostages were released. I as involved in their reception and subsequent debriefing. One of the things I had to do was to meet at a very early point with the lawyers for the incoming Reagan administration to convince them not to recommend to the President

that he abrogate, or refuse to accept, the Algiers agreement by which the hostages had been released. Some of them were under the impression that this had been a ransom deal. When we were able to point out to them that Warren Christopher had very skillfully negotiated an arrangement in which we used frozen Iranian assets to pay for American claims, we got any move to abrogate the arrangement turned off. Most of the time I was just keeping abreast of the ins and outs of the process.

Q: You said you picked up a considerable bit of the role of getting the Americans out as this thing was going...we had about 40,000 people. What were some of the problems that you ran across getting out this large group of relatively unsophisticated people. These were mechanics, technicians, and all of a sudden they're in the middle of nowhere in an ongoing revolution.

NEWSOM: It actually went rather smoothly. We had the cooperation of the business community and institutions. There were a few that didn't think it was necessary to leave. A few wanted substantial payments for the damages they felt they would incur, and we had to negotiate that out. I remember it as a fairly smooth operation. We didn't lose anybody; we had some recalcitrant oil people who didn't think they needed to leave but as the situation deteriorated I think they understood the necessity.

Q: Did Ross Perot come up on your radar at all at that time?

NEWSOM: Oh, yes. His EDS corporation had a big contract with the previous Iranian government. When the new government came in and examined the books they felt that EDS still owed the Iranians a substantial amount of taxes. And when Perot refused to pay, they detained two or three of the executives of this company. Perot saw them as hostages, he didn't acknowledge that they had any claim on the company. So he talked about mounting this commando operation to get them released. What actually happened was that the guards in the prison where they were being held at the time of the revolution just walked away, and everybody walked out of the prison. We were able to arrange for these

men to escape over an overland route and come out through Turkey where they were met by our consular people. Perot claimed that he had liberated them. I called him during all of this to tell him his claim was not helpful because we were trying to still maintain the cooperation of the authorities, and it wasn't helpful to have the authorities think that we were trying to go around behind their backs. He acknowledged that there may have been some exaggeration in his story. Now according to a book that Gerald Posner has written on Perot, Perot paid a million dollars to Ken Follett to put his version of this escape into a book called “The Flight of the Eagles”. So this was my confrontation with Ross Perot.

Q: Moving on to the major relationship with the Soviet Union during this time, '78 to '81. When you arrived the Carter administration was making a valiant effort to change the confrontation and send Thomas Watson as ambassador there who came from the IBM family. The idea was that he could do business with these people, and maybe we could do something. Was this a divergence from how the State Department was viewing...this is the late Brezhnev period.

NEWSOM: I didn't have a lot to do with relations with the Soviets. That was handled by the Secretary, and by Marshall Shulman who was the Secretary's special assistant for Soviet affairs. All of that has been pretty well documented.

Q: Did you get the feeling in talking...I mean the Soviet Union looms so high in our relations, that we might be being overly optimistic, or did we have the feeling that the Soviet Union was a considerable threat?

NEWSOM: I was only aware of some basic differences in appreciation of the Soviet Union and direction of policy between the Secretary and Brzezinski, and between Marshall Shulman and people in the White House. I've never been an expert in that area and am not in a position to comment.

Q: What about any problems with NATO that came across your...

NEWSOM: No, that again was something I didn't get very much involved in. I was involved in our policy toward Poland, and what to do about the Jaruzelski regime, martial law in Poland, and the decision to provide Commodity Credit Corporation credits for agricultural commodities to Poland. I went to Poland at one point to talk about family reunification cases, and I was impressed with the resoluteness of the Poles at that time to maintain as much independence from the Soviet Union as they could.

Q: Again, dealing with Poland, Brzezinski being of Polish origin very definitely. He made quite a point of being this. Did you find he had firm ideas on how to deal with Poland?

NEWSOM: Yes, but I didn't ever have a feeling of any particular conflict with the Department on Poland.

Q: How about Afghanistan? How did that hit the Department? We're talking about the December 1979 Soviet invasion.

NEWSOM: It turned around every effort that might then have been in progress to improve relations with the Soviets. It was seen as a Soviet disregard of American concerns about the stability of that part of Asia. Prior to that we had had to deal with what we would do about the Taraki regime which came into power after the fall of the Daud government. There again we were faced, in some ways like Nicaragua, with the question of, do you continue American assistance? I went to Afghanistan, I met with Taraki, and I met with his deputy, Mohammed Amin, and there was no doubt but what they were heavily influenced by the Soviets but wanted to maintain links with the west. So my recommendation was that we try to do that as long as we could do it in an honorable and unimpeded way. Well, that didn't last too long because the Soviet invasion followed.

We had one episode when a Soviet defector came into our embassy, but there was no way we could get that defector out. So we had to negotiate as much as we could a release with assurances of safety for the soldier, but we never heard what happened to him.

Q: Any problems with India or Pakistan during the time you were there?

NEWSOM: Yes. We had a lot of action with Pakistan because Pakistan became the focal point for resisting the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. That was when we had the problem of trying to help Pakistanis who, at the time of the invasion, were under sanctions because of their nuclear program. So we had to get that reversed and make a decision to provide aid to Pakistan. Unfortunately the amount of aid that we were thinking of providing leaked out. Some reporter approached General Zia, who was the president of Pakistan at the time, and said that he understood that the State Department is talking about $200 millions in aid to Pakistan: “What do you think of that, Mr. President?” And he replied, “Peanuts.” So we lost some of our negotiating room on that. I think we ultimately had to up the ante.

Q: Particularly since Carter was a peanut farmer.

NEWSOM: Pakistan suddenly became very important and we had to put aside the concerns over nonproliferation in order to funnel aid to the Afghan freedom fighters through Pakistan.

Q: At the time with Iran suddenly changing around, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan you were seeing had big red arrows heading down towards the Persian Gulf. Even despite all the nasty terrain, it was considered that the Soviets were on the move. Within the State Department was this taken seriously?

NEWSOM: It was taken very seriously. You had the immediate sanctions after the Soviet invasion including the grain embargo. I had to call Armand Hammer and tell him that he couldn't go ahead with a large petro-chemical plant that he was anticipating constructing in the Soviet Union. We cut off exchanges of various kinds. I don't think there was ever a military option that was considered because the terrain and circumstances made that impossible. But no, it was considered a major turning point with US-Soviets relations.

Q: Did we feel the Soviets had a major objective? Were they trying to do something with this? Or was this a reaction to the chaos that had taken place?

NEWSOM: There was great debate over what the Soviet objectives were. The more hawkish people saw this as the first thrust of the Soviets toward the Persian Gulf. I think in the State Department there was a general tendency to look at it in terms of what was happening in Afghanistan, to look at the units they were sending in, where they were sending them, to argue that there was nothing in the deployment of the Soviets, and their configuration in Afghanistan which suggested this was a part of a grand push south. And I think that was the correct assessment.

Q: Moving on, did you have much to do with China?

NEWSOM: No. I was aware of the effort to reestablish, or normalize, relations with China, but that was very closely held. I didn't get involved in that.

Q: Korea? Japan?

NEWSOM: No. I followed the ongoing Philippine base negotiations because I had been there, but nothing particularly significant.

Q: Several general questions. CIA had undergone a real house cleaning under Carter. How were relations with the CIA at your level, and how you saw them?

NEWSOM: They were good. David Aaron of the NSC, Frank Carlucci of the CIA, Bob Komer of the Defense Department, and I met periodically to work on intelligence matters. My recollection is that it was a fairly smooth working organization. I had a lot of admiration for Admiral Stansfield Turner, a man who stood up against sometimes rather bizarre pressures to undertake actions that he didn't think were either feasible or in the national interest.

Q: Relations with the Department of Defense?

NEWSOM: My principal contact was someone I had worked with before, Robert Komer, who was something of a personality. He was the Under Secretary for Policy. I did travel with him to one NATO meeting to be sure that our views were presented in a satisfactorily moderate voice.

Q: You were to sit on his side and tug on his sleeve. He had the nickname of the blow torch, or something like that.

NEWSOM: I was charged with riding herd on Komer.

Q: As a last question, I have one more after this. What was your impression about how the Foreign Service officers were used during this time within both the State Department, NSC, and other places?

NEWSOM: I think they were well used and performed well. The sad outcome of that was that a number of them were severely penalized by the Reagan administration because of their identification with policies that the Reagan administration wanted to reverse. The worst of all cases was that of Bill Bowdler (Assistant Secretary for American Republic Affairs), who has never recovered from being summarily dismissed. I was the interim between the two administrations and during the transition a directive came over from the White House saying that no presidential appointee of the Carter administration should be at his or her desk on January 21st 1981. So I went to Al Haig, who was the designated Secretary of State, and said, “Look this is absurd. You can't operate the State Department effectively without these people. A large number of those on the list are professionals who have carried over from one administration to the other.” So he said, “All right, I'll go over the list with people in the White House, and we'll see if we can't get this reversed.” He did, and came back to say that three officers should not be at their desks. One was Bowdler, another was Peter Tarnoff, who was the head of the Executive Secretariat and

was seen as too political by the White House. I don't remember who the third was. But at lower levels, people like Jim Cheek, who worked on Latin American affairs, people who had gotten on the wrong side of Jesse Helms, never recovered during the Reagan years. Some of them got good jobs later but that was a sad episode.

Q: You retired at this point, didn't you?

NEWSOM: Yes.

Q: What was your feeling about Al Haig? He seemed to be somewhat removed from this White House group, wasn't he?

NEWSOM: He was an interesting man to work with. He came in very much influenced by the ideological agenda of the Reagan administration. And part of my job as the interim secretary was to brief him and to try to point out where some of his assumptions about past policies were wrong. And he would listen. In some cases he would change his mind, and in some cases not. What he did do was to dismiss the rather cumbersome and intrusive transition team that had originally been appointed and put three people in charge of the State Department transition. Rick Burt, Paul Wolfowitz, and Kenneth Adelman. I worked with those three who were reasonable men who understood the issues and helped make a fairly smooth transition. It was a crazy transition because Haig wasn't confirmed for four or five days after the inauguration, and then Stoessel wasn't confirmed for another three weeks. So I was the only confirmed officer on the 7th floor other than the Secretary for about a month, and all the Reagan people were at their desks but had no authority. A couple of times Haig went on foreign trips and I became the Acting Secretary.

Q: Just for the record, where did you go after you retired?

NEWSOM: I came to Georgetown University as the director of the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy and, subsequently, Associate Dean in the School of Foreign Service. I held that job until 1990 when I retired from Georgetown and went to the University of Virginia as the

Cumming Professor of International Relations, a position that I still hold. I had a leave of absence last year to be the interim dean in the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown. I seem to have some expertise at being interim.

Q: All right, we'll leave at that point. Great.

End of interview